

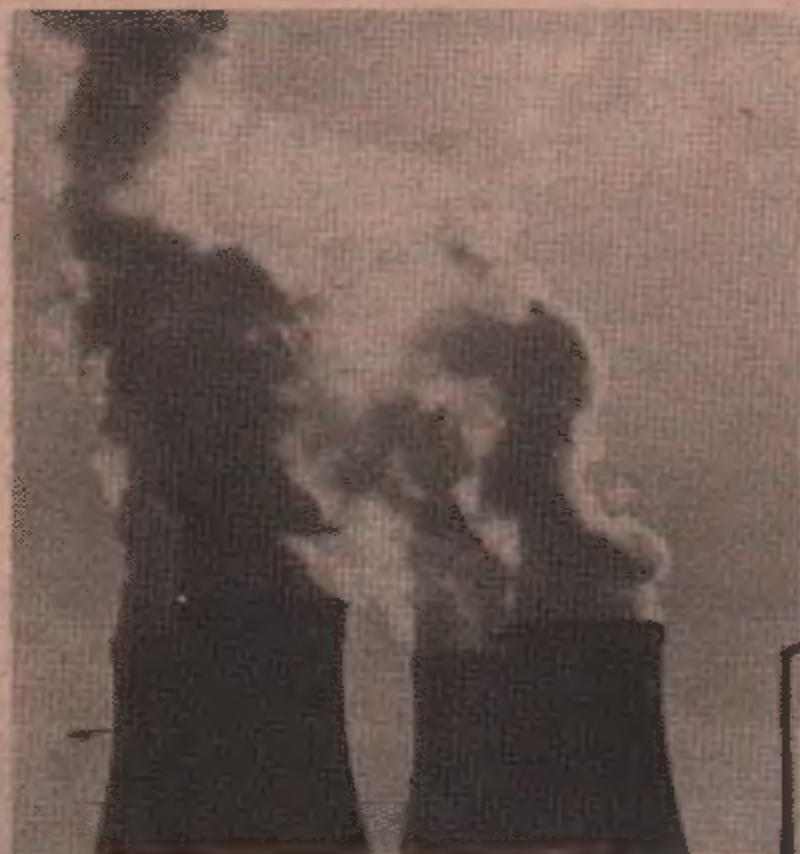
# FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

Number 84 February 1989

(unwaged 20p) 40p

## RACIST ATTACK



### Whose Earth?

Pollution, ozone and the fightback  
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### Reagan Years

All about the glittering rubbish tip  
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days and nights  
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### Terry O'Halloran

Communist and journalist for  
*Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*  
has died  
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### VIRAJ MENDIS

On 18 January Viraj Mendis was snatched from his sanctuary by police. Within hours, the RCG and VMDC organised a nationwide fightback. The fight goes on

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**The truth about Sri Lanka**  
that makes Thatcher, Hurd and  
Renton bare-faced liars

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## WE FIGHT BACK





## We salute Viraj Mendis

The Revolutionary Communist Group salutes Viraj Mendis.

Viraj Mendis joined our organisation, the Revolutionary Communist Group, in 1980. He became well known in Manchester for his leading role in anti-racist and anti-deportation campaigns, and was vocal in support of the Tamil cause.

In 1984 Viraj was attacked by the Home Office when the police confiscated his passport and began deportation proceedings against him.

The RCG established the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign. Its aims were:

- to prevent Viraj's deportation to certain death in Sri Lanka
- to expose the racist nature of British immigration controls and
- to build a movement against them.

The campaign lasted four years and eight months of which Viraj spent 761 days in Sanctuary in the Church of the Ascension, Hulme, Manchester. The sanctuary became a focus for all those fighting Britain's racist immigration controls. It became a thorn in the side of the Government.

Both the Revolutionary Communist Group and Viraj himself knew that his fight, as a black communist, was not going to be easy. The entire apparatus of the British state, its courts and its police were ranged against him and the VMDC. We were also aware that our fight was taking place during a period of wholesale retreat by the organised working class movement. The government was determined to defeat our resistance because we are communists, communists determined to lead resistance to Britain's racist laws.

On 18 January 1989 at 7.30am, the police battered down doors and forced entry into the church, violently kidnapped Viraj and took him to Pentonville Prison in London. Thatcher's ministers, Hurd and Renton, then concocted a farago of lies to cover up their racist attack:

**The third country option:** Early in January 1989, the Home Office promised not to raid the church while Viraj pursued the option of deportation to another country other than Sri Lanka. They cynically broke this undertaking and then lied to the press.

**Is Viraj a refugee?** Viraj has not claimed refugee status. He has argued against his deportation not only on the grounds that his life is at risk if he returns to Sri Lanka, but equally importantly because he had lived in Britain for 15 years - all his adult life. Britain having exploited and plundered the world, forcing their peoples to come to here to seek a livelihood now denies them the right to live free of the fear of deportation. It has erected immigration laws condemned as the worst in Europe. Hurd and Renton simply used the issue of refugee status to cover up their racism.

**Viraj's appeals were turned down in every court:** Hurd and Renton know full well that the terms for each of Viraj's appeals against deportation could be based only on narrow issues of law. There has been no full review of Viraj's case since 1985, despite a rapidly worsening situation in Sri Lanka. They also refused to apply the 'ten year rule', a discretionary power which allows so-called illegal immigrants the

right to remain in this country after ten years' residence.

Despite all the lying, brutal actions of Thatcher's racist government, the VMDC has achieved lasting gains for black people and the whole working class movement in Britain.

It has built the biggest ever anti-deportation campaign in Britain which has allowed thousands of individuals and organisations to unite in the fight against racism. Equally significantly it created a movement which united sections of the British working class and progressive movement in the fight against racist immigration controls. Such a development, never part of the traditions of the British Labour movement and neglected by the British left, is in fact a pre-condition for building a socialist movement in Britain.

The campaign was built and developed under the leadership of the RCG with a strategy which had two major components: firstly the organisation and mobilisation of the oppressed sections of the working class as a crucial force in drawing in all other anti-racist forces including churches, trade unions and political parties; secondly, the successful fight for open and democratic structures in the campaign which allowed all involved organisations and individuals to contribute to formulating the campaign's strategy.

Viraj's sanctuary is a beacon of inspiration to black people fighting deportation. It inspired Rajwinder Singh in Bradford, Renoukaben Lakhani in Leicester and Salema Begum in Manchester to take sanctuary and win their fight against deportation. Mushtaq Hussein, then Secretary of Rajwinder's campaign declared:

'Like all black people we are proud that Viraj has shown us the way out. He has given us a weapon to fight back against racist immigration controls. Sanctuary is a weapon in the hands of the people and we must use it.'

The VMDC will remain a part of the best traditions of the anti-racist and socialist movement in Britain and cannot be destroyed by police raids or kidnappings.

The campaign for Viraj Mendis forced the question of Britain's racist immigration controls to the centre of the British political stage. As the *Guardian* leader commented on 19 January:

'No recent case has helped focus so much attention on British deportation procedures. Over 700 people were deported from the UK last year. Most people would be unable to identify even one of the deportees. Viraj Mendis is not going to be forgotten.'

Indeed, Viraj will not be forgotten. His name will be part of the working class movement and every new campaign against immigration controls will start with the lessons of the VMDC.

The RCG thanks all those who have worked so hard and helped Viraj in his fight. The best and most lasting legacy of the VMDC must be a united campaign against Britain's racist immigration controls.

We are sure that one day our movement will be strong enough to welcome Viraj back to the country where he has spent all his adult life - Britain.

**Our day will come.**

## News ..... Mexico braces for battle

TREVOR RAYNE/MIKE WEBBER

**Confrontation is looming between the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) government of Carlos Salinas and millions of Mexican workers.** That is the main conclusion that can be drawn from the arrest of oil workers' union leader Joaquin Hernandez on 10 January. Hernandez was accused of possessing weapons, homicide, gun smuggling and resisting arrest. The oil workers' union (STPRM) has long been considered a secure base for PRI. Its leaders are millionaires; the union runs its own company which operates a drilling concern, one of the biggest in Mex-

ico. These are the rewards for ensuring loyalty to the ruling class in an industry that accounts for 45 per cent of exports.

Real incomes in Mexico have fallen by fifty per cent since 1982. Union bosses have found it increasingly difficult to impose austerity measures like March-December's wage freeze. Hernandez knew which way the wind was blowing and refused to give backing to Salina's Presidential election campaign. In the event Salinas and the PRI won through generally acknowledged fraud. The leftist National Democratic Front (NDF) was widely regarded as the true winner. Many oil workers voted for the NDF. Mexican oil revenues have continued to fall. The

bourgeoisie must force costs down further. As corrupt as Hernandez and his fellow union leaders are they represent a barrier to the bourgeoisie's plans. Their power derives from their position within the administration of the oil industry and relatively privileged position of Mexican oil workers. That privilege and power can no longer be sustained.

Tens of thousands of oil workers went on strike in protest at their union leader's arrest. For the moment they have returned to work. It is clear that the Mexican bourgeois order is in deep trouble: and another crisis in the Yankee's backyard is good news for the oppressed everywhere. ■



## Thousands of Iranian political prisoners executed

JONATHAN COHEN

**On 18 July 1988, the Islamic Republic of Iran announced its acceptance of UN Resolution 598 and of a ceasefire in the Iran-Iraq war. Hardly had the gunfire ceased, than the odious Khomeini regime began mass executions of political prisoners. Iran's political prisoners are thought to number at least 50,000. Of these between 15,000 and 20,000 may have been killed so far.**

Since 30 July all political prisoners have been forbidden visitors and their families who have gathered in front of the prisons have been brutally dispersed. In order to prevent mass protests by relatives, the authorities have delayed informing them of executions by up to three months.

These political prisoners were either shot in prisons or hanged publicly from the iron girders of half-finished buildings. They include prisoners who were released after finishing their sentence but were rearrested and executed without even the formality of another trial.

After the mass executions began, political prisoners at Tehran's Gohar-dasht prison launched a hunger strike. The prison guards fired on the strikers and killed all two hundred of them. In Evin prison, prisoners were crowded into a hall which was then blown up.

The crisis-ridden Iranian regime has lost all credibility among the people. Already notorious for torture and executions

of political prisoners, it has now resorted to wholesale slaughter in a desperate drive to eliminate the opposition.

### IRAQ, TURKEY AND THE KURDS

Shortly after the Gulf War ceasefire, the vicious regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq stepped up its genocidal onslaught on the Kurds in the north of the country. Using chemical weapons, the 'Hitler of Baghdad' massacred 5,000 civilians at Halabja, and has killed hundreds of others in similar attacks since April 1987.

About 200,000 Kurds have consequently fled from Iraq to Turkey and Iran, and are now at the mercy of these two savage regimes, whose record of attacking the Kurdish people and ignoring human rights is at least as bad as the Iraqi regime itself!

Iranian refugees in Turkey and Pakistan have found no safe haven there. Just a few months ago, Turkey deported 52 Iranian refugees back to Iran, who were summarily executed only a few yards from the border. It is reported that the Turkish government received \$700 per head for this service to the Iranian regime.

The situation in European countries is not much better. France, which had previously deported Iraqis, expelled several Iranian refugees last year. In January four Iranian refugees were taken to court in Britain and most probably will be expelled for their activities against the Iranian regime.

There are thousands demand-

ing political refugee status in Europe and many have been refused it. Imperialist countries like Britain see the ceasefire as an opportunity to increase their domination in the region, bolstering the reactionary regimes of Iran, Iraq and Turkey, and making massive profits from post-war construction.

Britain does not give a damn about the human rights of oppressed people anywhere in the world, as the deportations of Viraj Mendis and Tamil asylum-seekers have clearly shown. Thatcher's racist ministers could not give two hoots whether Iranian dissidents live or die. As soon as the question of British hostages in Iran and Lebanon is resolved and Iran-British relations are normalised, Iranian refugees will face increased risk of deportation.

### SOLIDARITY

A Committee Against the Massacres in Iran, Iraq and Turkey (CAM) has recently been formed. The RCG is among the sponsors of this new campaign, and we urge all readers and supporters to do what they can to help.

Future activities include: **PICKETS** \* Iraqi Cultural Centre, Tottenham Court Road, London. 1pm, Saturday 25 February. Tube: Goodge Street. \* Turkish Airways, 1pm, 18 March. \* United Nations Information Centre, 1pm, 25 March. **PUBLIC MEETING** 22 April. **DEMONSTRATION** 6 May. Details: CAM, 58 Dufey House Edmund Street, London SE5 7PB. ■



# News .....

## Victory for Plaistow 4

NATHLY PARKER

On Friday 27 January, after hearing the evidence of twelve police officers over a three day period, the Plaistow four finally received some justice. The magistrate at West Ham threw the case out of court.

The allegations made by Inspector MacKinney, who led the raid, were that he and other officers were assaulted as they tried to enter a flat on the thirteenth floor on the David Lee estate in Plaistow.

Ron and Clive Springer (18 and 23), Reynold Muthurin (22) and Steven Vernhee (22) were all arrested at a christening party at 11pm on 16 June last year. All four were charged with Police Assault and Obstruction. They were all beaten up both on the way to the police station and

in the station itself.

The police claimed to have spent about twenty minutes outside the flat negotiating with the occupants before they supposedly heard a smash which made it necessary for them to enter, to prevent a fight taking place inside. Inspector MacKinney said that one of the reasons why he felt he had to enter was because 'there was always trouble at those sort of parties'. MacKinney told the court that as he was about to enter Ron Skinner said 'don't listen to the pigs' and claimed to have cautioned him whereupon the Inspector was assaulted at first by Ron and then Clive was supposed to have joined in, also assaulting another officer in the process. Other officers claimed that they were assaulted by Reynold and Steven on the landing outside after the first arrests had taken place.

The prosecution's case hinged on the fact that MacKinney was acting in his duty to prevent a breach of the peace by entering the premises. Throughout the hearing the police evidence was contradictory. A sergeant claimed that there was music playing while they were at the door. MacKinney said that the music had been turned off, allowing him to hear the 'smash'. Neither MacKinney nor any other policeman could give an accurate account of how many men or vehicles were present during the raid. Most of them could not even remember if dogs were present.

One policeman, when asked, 'Did you know that there is a lot of friction between blacks and the police and was it not provocative to go in such numbers?' replied that he had never heard of such a thing. ■

## Wapping police charged

CAROL BRICKLEY

Charges of assault, conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, attempting to pervert the course of justice and perjury have been brought against 24 Metropolitan police officers in relation to their conduct at Wapping during the News International dispute on 24 January 1987. It has taken two years to make the decision to charge them.

This is the largest group of Met officers ever charged in relation to a single incident and the alleged attempt to cover up the facts during the police investigation. The police involved have not yet been named but there are 18 constables, four sergeants, one WPC and an inspector.

Senior officers down at the Yard are said to be in deep distress. Deputy Assistant Commissioner Wyn Jones asked: what does the public expect the police to do when faced with the sort of violence that confronted



them on 24 January 1987? Assault the demonstrators and then lie and cheat to cover up their actions, of course.

The deep distress has spread to neighbouring Kent Constabulary. PC Ron Walker has been vindicated after a three year inquiry into corruption in the Force. Five years ago, Walker claimed that bribing criminals to admit to extra offences to im-

prove the police clear-up rate was a 'widespread practice'. Three years ago PC Walker was put on sick leave after his fellow upholders of the law ostracised him for telling the truth. He has been sick ever since. During two subsequent inquiries evidence mysteriously disappeared. Serious disciplinary charges are now expected to be made against a number of Kent officers. ■

## POLICE ATTACK MONERVILLE FAMILY

CAROL BRICKLEY

On 15 January Hackney police again attacked the family of Trevor Monerville. Mr and Mrs Burke, Trevor's grandparents, reported a road accident. 14 police officers arrived at their home and insisted on breathalysing Mr Burke, aged 76, who was ill in bed. Mr Burke refused and was then dragged from his bed in his underclothes and bundled into a police van. Both Mr and Mrs Burke were assaulted by police. Mrs Burke, aged 70, was thrown onto the van floor with four police officers pinioning her with their boots on her wrists and ankles.

Mr Burke was not charged with any offence. Mrs Burke was strip searched and then charged with actual bodily harm of a police officer. Police claimed that they thought that Mr Burke or Trevor Monerville had been driving the car involved in the accident.

Trevor Monerville 'disappeared' at 1am on 1 January 1986 and was next seen by his family on 5 January in Brixton prison where he was 'lying naked on a mattress on the floor. His body was badly bruised, even the soles of his feet were cut and marked. There was vomit and blood in his hair.' The next day Trevor was rushed to hospital for brain surgery.

During the five days of Trevor's 'disappearance', Trevor's father enquired at Stoke Newington police station in person three times, including showing the police a photo, and he phoned them many times. Trevor was lying, seriously injured, in the cells below.

The charge against Trevor (breaking a car window) was dropped on 'humanitarian grounds'. But since Trevor started civil action against police, he has been arrested twice: on the first occasion he was beaten and again hospitalised; on the sec-

ond he was charged with breaching bail. This is now the subject of a civil action.

Trevor has now left Britain to recover from his injuries and, like Steven Shaw, to prevent further police harassment. So Stoke Newington police have now started harassing his family.

The record of police racism in Stoke Newington is long. Four black people have died in custody: Aseta Simms (1971); Michael Ferreira (1978); Colin Roach (1983); and Tunay Hussan (1987). Others have been harassed and assaulted including David and Lucille White, Derek Pascall and Ace Kelly, all of whom successfully sued the police.

The charge against Mrs Burke has now been dropped by the Crown Prosecution Service on the grounds of age and the 'unlikelihood' of Mrs Burke repeating the offence. How unlikely is it that Hackney police will repeat their offences?

The Trevor Monerville Campaign needs your support: The Family Centre, 50 Rectory Road, London N16 7QY. Tel: 01-249 0193. ■

## Terry O'Halloran

1 May 1952-23 January 1989



Terry died on 23 January 1989. His death was sudden and unexpected. His loss to the communist movement is immeasurable.

Terry was a member of the RCG for nearly 14 years. When he left in November 1988 he continued to support the RCG through his work for our paper *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*. At the time of his death he was preparing a major feature article on the new Housing Act for this issue of the paper. He had recently written a chapter for the RCG's forthcoming pamphlet on the Gibraltar events. A few days before he died he was on a picket outside Pentonville prison for our comrade Viraj Mendis.

'It was with great sadness that I learnt of Terry's tragic death. When I first met him in 1977 I was immediately impressed by his knowledge of the situation in Ireland, by his principled support for our armed struggle, and by his understanding of the vital differences between the revolutionaries of the Republican Movement and the revisionists of the Workers' Party. The oppressed of this earth have lost a true comrade and the revolutionary movement has lost an indefatigable worker. May he rest in peace.'

Sean Mac Stiofain,  
Chief of Staff Irish Republican Army  
1969-1972

Terry came from a working class Irish background. It was this background which was a major influence on his politics. It enabled him to make not only a lasting contribution to the RCG but also help lay the foundations for a principled communist standpoint on the national question for the working class movement in Britain.

This commitment was translated into practice through years of work fighting to build a movement in Britain in support of the Irish people's struggle for freedom. He played a key role in building the large demonstrations in 1978 called by the Prisoners Aid Committee in support of Irish PoWs. He was centrally involved in our efforts to build an Irish solidarity movement in the early 1980s. Terry could always be found on the pickets outside the South African Embassy and for more than two years he had a regular spot on the Non-Stop Picket.

Terry was one of the joint authors of the article 'Ireland: Imperialism in Crisis 1968-78' which appeared in our journal *Revolutionary Communist* in July 1978. Through it we rediscovered the revolutionary standpoint of Marx and Engels on the Irish question. Under the name John Fitzgerald Terry edited our bulletin *Hands off Ireland* and as Terry Marlowe and Terry O'Halloran he wrote countless articles for our publications. All showed the same fierce commitment to the right of the Irish people to self determination and all showed that same commitment to those Irish 'people of no property' whence he came.

Throughout his time in the RCG I worked closely with Terry and learned a great deal from him. Without his contribution my book *Ireland: the key to the British revolution* could never have been written. We travelled to Ireland together on two occasions interviewing Gerry Adams for *Hands off Ireland!* in October 1978 when he was vice-president of Sinn Féin, and Reamonn Mac Lochlainn in Buncrana, Co Donegal in May 1984 soon after he had been released from 10 years in British gaols. Terry always knew the crucial questions to ask and the interviews were always penetrating. In September 1985 Reamonn, like Terry, died tragically and suddenly. Terry had corresponded with Reamonn for a number of years

and when they met they got on together immediately.

The Irish political prisoners have always appreciated the work the RCG does on the Irish question and have welcomed the political contact kept with Irish and other prisoners through regular correspondence and the prison page of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*. Terry did more than anyone to build up this contact. He edited the prison page until November 1988 and recently encouraged prisoners through our pages to enter in a discussion on the fight for prisoners' rights. His work in this area will be greatly missed.

Terry has played a central role in the production of most of our publications. He was on the Editorial Board of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* until he left, editing the news pages and the prison page. He was overall responsible for sub-editing and proof reading the paper. Many who wrote for the paper complained of Terry's ruthlessness in cutting down their often rather indulgent articles. But in spite of deflated egos the product was always better after Terry had got to work on it. Terry contributed material for our book on the miners strike, he wrote material for and edited the first edition of the pamphlet on Viraj Mendis, and he was a joint author of our pamphlet on South Africa.

Terry was not only a good writer but a good speaker as well. Many of us remember how in a debate between the RCG and CPGB in October 1981 he ruthlessly and systematically destroyed the arguments of Chris Myant of the CPGB who tried to justify supporting the armed struggle of the ANC in South Africa while attacking that of the IRA in Ireland. Terry reminded the CPGB of the real communist tradition. Communists, he argued, oppose any form of imperialist oppression, support the struggle of oppressed people against imperialism, whether it be the IRA in Ireland or the ANC in South Africa.

Terry could have had a career in bourgeois journalism. He was however not prepared to sell his principles to the ruling class press and he preferred to remain, in spite of financial hardship, a revolutionary journalist. He was active in the National Union of Journalists and was secretary and later chair of the London Freelance Branch. He always fought for a principled political standpoint in the NUJ and his efforts were central to the NUJ taking up a non-sectarian position of support for all sections of the movement fighting apartheid in South Africa. Terry also sat on the Ethics Council of the NUJ fighting for the union to implement strictly its codes of practice when dealing with the racism of much of the British press.

'Terry O'Halloran was a fearless journalist and a caring man. There are not many of these and we can ill-afford to lose him. His work is not finished and he has left us his example to follow.'

Alastair Logan  
Solicitor who defends many prisoners in British gaols

Terry loved literature; his favourite author was Charles Dickens. He appreciated, and tried to get us all to appreciate, the rich, ironical representation of the whole of society to be found in Dickens. Life was there for him in all its complexity, in spite of being driven by the all-consuming bourgeois ethic of money, power and pride. David Copperfield was his favourite. He loved Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. He chose the name Marlowe after Chandler's laid-back detective. His favourite music came from the 1960s and proof reading of *FRFI* was accompanied by loud and seemingly endless sixties tapes and particularly Bob Dylan.

Terry's death is a great loss and sadness to us all. But knowing him he would want us to adopt the slogan used in the South African movement 'Don't mourn, mobilise'. The best epitaph to Terry will be the building of a communist movement in Britain. He gave his adult life to that task. We should pay homage to his memory by strengthening our commitment to building the movement he unfortunately did not see in his short lifetime.

The RCG extends its deep-felt condolences to James, Simone and all Terry's family.

David Reed 26 January 1989

## Memorial Meeting

organised by the RCG

Thursday 16 February, 7.30pm

Westminster Cathedral Conference Centre  
off Victoria Street, London SW1  
(nearest tube - Victoria)



# Defend the Cape Town 16

In December 1988 the trial ended of fifteen young ANC members in Cape Town, South Africa. Six of them were sentenced to 10-15 years; four others received two year sentences. Another young man, Ashley Kriel, aged 20, was murdered by security police. Delysia Forbes, sister of Ashley Forbes who received a 15 year sentence, lives in England and is a member of City of London Anti-Apartheid Group. She has launched a campaign to defend the prisoners.



The fifteen were sentenced on the basis of evidence beaten out of them by Security police. The descriptions of their detention remind us that nothing has changed in racist South Africa for those who are detained: they are tortured just as the activists in the 1960s were tortured. One of the defendants described his treatment:

'Fenzien [police] forced me to lay face down on the mat. The material-canvas type bag was

placed over my head and turned extremely tight. After a short period I was near suffocation and then water would be thrown on the bag. I then inhaled the water. On the verge of losing consciousness he would remove the bag from my mouth for brief seconds. To just immediately continue, this seemed to me like hours. After a period of this I said that I would talk. Everything was then removed but

other handcuffs would be put on... I told them where I stayed but got stuck on the present address because Forbes was there. Then again Benzien said, 'I'll take you to the verge of death as many times as I want to'. In that momentary break something was placed in my anus and ear with which I was shocked.'

While the apartheid regime is attempting to persuade the world that it is humanely releasing veteran leaders like Harry Gwala and Zeph Mothopeng, the harsh reality is that the prisons are overflowing with the new generation of young people who have taken up the struggle against apartheid. The treatment and sentences of these young activists is the real indicator that apartheid will not be reformed away, but will be smashed by the action of the oppressed majority. ■

The Cape Town 16 Defence Campaign can be contacted at 11 Shackleton Road, Southall, Middlesex UB1 2JA.

# Free Ishmael Ebrahim

JANE BURROWS

On 16 January Ishmael Ebrahim, leading ANC member, was convicted of treason and sentenced to 20 years in apartheid jails. His co-accused Mandla Maseko and Simon Dladla were sentenced to 23 and 12 years respectively. Ishmael Ebrahim is the most senior ANC member to be tried since 1964. When he was sentenced he said: 'If I were to choose my life all over again I would follow the same path. I could never have remained in-

different to the poverty and suffering of our people.' The issue which underlies the trial is the manner of Comrade Ebrahim's capture.

In December 1986, Ishmael Ebrahim was living in Swaziland when South African agents raided his house and took him across the border, at gunpoint, to waiting South African security police. He was then tortured and put on trial for high treason. The facts of his arrest are one more example of South Africa's total contempt for the borders of neighbouring states.

When the sentence was announced against the three, the accused and the public gallery shouted slogans and sang freedom songs. It was at this point that a woman state prosecutor shouted 'Lang lewe die AWB' (Long Live the AWB - South Africa's most prominent Nazi-style white organisation). Such is the reality of apartheid.

On the day before sentence was passed, the US Pentagon issued its list of terrorist organisations, endorsed by President Bush. The list included the ANC. ■

# Batting for apartheid

CAROL BRICKLEY

The English Test and County Cricket Board has imposed a minimum four year ban from playing Test cricket on any player who has contact with South Africa after 1 April 1989. The motive for this decision has little to do with isolating apartheid, and everything to do with money. In reality English cricket has been forced either to impose bans or face the prospect of no future Test tours - on which the 17 County Cricket clubs rely for half their income.

Faced with the cancellation of this winter's Indian tour and the prospect of a ban by the West Indies, the English Board knew it had to impose sanctions against England's cricketers for whom - the white ones, that is - South Africa has become a favourite and lucrative wintering spot.

The question was how short the ban could be to stave off isolation. Australia has imposed a 10 year ban and other countries have life-time bans. The International Cricket Conference (ICC)

settled for four years for senior professionals, five for touring team players, with a further two year ban for subsequent transgressions. Eight of England's cricket team have played in South Africa: all of them are white.

The South African Cricket Union tried to ward off the decision with a familiar round of propaganda about black members in its cricket teams and its concern to teach cricket in the townships. None of this was likely to hold sway, given the presence at the ICC of the non-racial South African Cricket Association, whose slogan is 'Don't play with Apartheid'. Following the ECC ban the racists left Britain proclaiming that they had enough money to buy any cricket player they wanted.

It seems that both the South Africans and the British Freedom Association have unlimited finance (from the same coffers?) to promote apartheid. When the ICC's intentions were announced the Freedom Association launched two High Court actions against the ICC claiming that the threatened bans would

be 'blackmail' and 'restraint of trade'. The 'blackmail' argument was kicked out by a High Court judge who labelled it an 'abuse of the courts'. The 'restraint of trade' action is being lodged in the name of two white 'English' cricketers, one of whom, Neal Radford, was born in Zambia; the other, Kevin Curran, a Zimbabwean who plays under an Irish passport of convenience. Radford is wintering in South Africa at the moment.

More than half the England team would join a rebel tour to South Africa, claimed Jack Bannister, secretary of the Cricketers' Association: 'I know for certain that South Africa could take an England rebel side at the drop of a hat. There are at least seven or eight of the current England players who have signified their assent to go if the money was right because they are sick and tired of political interference.' The only interference they resent is to their freedom to make money out of human misery - and their cricket isn't up to much either. ■

# Living on the edge of a precipice

DAVID REED

The stockmarket boomed as the fourth largest monthly balance of payments deficit on record was announced for December 1988. The FTSE index surged by 46 points to close at 2005 - the first time it has been over 2000 since the October 1987 crash. £9.7bn was added to share values.

The December deficit of £1.26bn was apparently lower than the City pundits had expected, hence the celebration. Interest rates had possibly peaked and almost certainly would not have to rise again for another month. Meanwhile there was some hope of making easy money again.

The facts belie such hopes.

The December deficit brought the total for 1988 to £14.3bn, more than 5 times the 1987 deficit of £2.7bn and the largest ever recorded in cash terms. At 3 per cent of GNP it is nearly as large as the post-war peak of 3.75 per cent in 1974. That resulted from the very steep rise in the price of oil and led to a sterling crisis. The present deficit is continuing to deteriorate. Last quarter's deficit of £5.05bn was substantially greater than the £3.7bn for the third quarter of 1988. It represents an annual rate of over £20bn, about 4 per cent of the GNP. Imports were up by 14 per cent on the same quarter as last year while exports declined by 2.5 per cent. The outlook is even worse.

Income from North Sea oil has

fallen by £8m to less than £20m a day over the last year. This was due to a 26 per cent drop in the sterling price of crude. The figures for this year will almost certainly be worse. 30 per cent of Britain's North Sea oil production is suspended because of the Piper Alpha and other recent North Sea disasters.

An editorial in the *Financial Times* scornfully assessed the market's reaction to the trade figures. "'Curiouser and curi- ouser,'" Alice would have cried'. One possible explanation, it said, is that 'like a man whose house is situated on the edge of a crumbling cliff, people have not merely got used to the view but have forgotten the state of the foundations.' ■

# Further attacks on NHS

VIRMAN MAN

With 100,000 nurses already appealing against their new pay grades, a fresh controversy has been sparked-off by the government's white paper on the National Health Service, due to be published as we go to press.

Leaked details of the proposals reveal that the main thrust is towards greater privatisation of the NHS. Health authorities are to buy and sell services to and from each other in an internal market. The government claims that this will allow more flexibility - patients will be able to travel to get earlier treatment from other health authorities. Hospitals are to specialise, in a rationalisation of services, for economic efficiency. The reality is, however, that the old, poor and infirm - those least able to travel - will be denied access to treatment.

Treatments are to be 'priced' so that health service managers will be able to 'shop' for the 'best deal', whether from the NHS or from the private sector. The white paper seeks to abolish local authority representation from the health authorities. Instead financiers and accountants will take on the running of hospitals.

All this comes when one-sixth of non-urgent operations (one-third in parts of London and the south-east) are already being done privately. Between 1981 and 1986 operations in private hospitals increased by 77% by 287,000. In the same period the use of NHS pay beds fell by 39% to 35,700 per year. The white paper will further attack public health provision.

Alongside this is the proposal to give family doctors a budget with which to buy treatment for their patients from competing hospitals. Half of any unspent

money will be kept by the doctors. The introduction of the profit motive means that patients requiring the most expensive treatment - the chronically ill and the elderly - will not be taken on by their doctors, and will have to take the cheapest treatment offered. Health provision will become a means of making a fast buck, and the cowboys will step in. We will see more of private patients being supplied with kidneys bought in oppressed countries.

Meanwhile, as waiting lists lengthen, Health Minister David Mellor dismisses as 'fishermen's stories' the fact that junior doctors, working an average 84 hours a week, are falling asleep at the operating table. The government has no intention of alleviating this or ensuring that proper health care is given for the poor and sick. The prime motivation is profit. ■

# Claimants criminalised

MIKE BURGESS

Having 'cut' the unemployment rate (by blatantly creating more than thirty successive ways to falsify the figures) and having forced future claimants off the statistics and onto phoney schemes like ET, the Tories published a new Social Security Bill last December, which will add gross insult to grievous injury, and will encourage its big business buddies to pay even lower wages into the bargain.

By legislating that claimants must now 'actively seek employment', the bill accuses the unemployed of bringing their misfortunes upon themselves. When it comes into effect, claimants will be regularly asked how many jobs they have applied for, and if the Department of Employment doesn't like the answers, claimants will have to show evidence, or lose their benefit.

After thirteen weeks of this, claimants will have to accept any job, no matter how badly paid, or lose their benefit.

Once you sign off the dole, you will not be able to re-register unless you have worked 16 hours in each of at least 13 weeks of the 26 weeks before the claim was lodged. In plain English,



you're damned if you do, and you're damned if you don't!

In this manner, £100 million will be cut from Social Security payments but the Tories seek to justify this assault on the working class by means of a recent Labour Force Survey which purports to show 730,000 claimants against 700,000 unfilled vacancies, and a survey published by the Department of Employment in 1987 in which an alleged 50% of London claimants had not looked for work in the previous month, 25% in the previous week, and 5% apparently had never looked for work.

The Social Security Bill requires that by 1990/91 all com-

pensation payments for injury will have to reimburse the state for benefit payments made to accident victims, an estimated £5.5m per year.

More recently, Mr Nicholas Scott, the Social Security Minister, announced a new crackdown on 'social security fraud', which he hopes will save almost £250 million in the current financial year: chickenfeed when compared to the estimated billions stolen from us each year through large-scale City fraud. Yet again, Thatcher is being allowed to deprive the desperate for the benefit of her cronies in commerce. ■



# Free the Guildford 4

MAXINE WILLIAMS

In January Douglas Hurd, the Home Secretary, announced that he was referring the case of the Guildford 4 to the Court of Appeal. It has taken fifteen long years for a British government to listen to the mounting clamour about the Guildford 4 frame-up. Even now, with this decision, there can be no certainty that justice will at last be done. The Appeal Court judges are past masters at covering up injustice, as they did in the Birmingham 6 Appeal. Mrs Lily Hill, mother of Paul Hill, one of the four, told *FRFI* that she is 'not building any hopes on the Appeal' and sees it 'as the start of a very hard battle'.

The British police and Home Office have known all along that the Guildford 4 are innocent. The Four were convicted on the basis of no scientific or witness evidence, merely on their confessions which were obtained under duress and by brutal ill-treatment. Their confessions bear all the hallmarks - inaccuracies and inconsistencies - of statements made under intense pressure whilst in custody. Witnesses who could have given alibi evidence for Carole Richardson were themselves threatened by the police into remaining silent.

However, there is another overwhelming piece of evidence in their favour. The Balcombe Street IRA Active Service Unit, captured in 1975, readily confessed to the Guildford and Woolwich bombings in order to ensure that these four innocent people were released. They provided a wealth of detail which only the bombers could have known. The police consciously suppressed this evidence and it has never been put before a jury.

Douglas Hurd, however, still refuses to allow the Balcombe Street men's evidence to be taken into account. Instead he has referred the case to the Appeal Court on the following narrow counts: whether the administration of a drug to Carole Richardson in custody would have affected her statements and two alibi witnesses not called at the



Above: Patrick Armstrong, above right: Carole Richardson  
Below: Gerard Conlon, below right: Paul Hill



trial, one for Carole Richardson, one for Paul Hill. The case will be heard by three senior judges whose first concern will be to protect the police, judges and politicians who have allowed this frame up to take place. By passing the buck to the Appeal Court, Hurd is thus appearing to take the matter seriously whilst actually doing the minimum possible.

After Hurd's announcement the families said they would have 'preferred that in the name of common humanity and justice, the Home Secretary ended the suffering of the Guildford 4 and their families by exercising his power to release Paul Hill, Gerard Conlon, Carole Richardson and Patrick Armstrong without further delay.' The families and supporters of the Guildford 4 have been campaigning for their release for many years. The evidence of their innocence is so overwhelming that it has attracted the support of a large number of Establishment figures.

It is indicative of the attitude of the Labour Party however, that as recently as December 1988, the Labour NEC refused to add

its support to claims that the Four are innocent. It said that 'the Party has never declared that it believes the Birmingham 6 or Guildford 4 to be innocent. It does not believe that the Party is in a position to declare them innocent. Such a conclusion could only be reached by lengthy research and investigation, the resources for which the NEC does not have at its disposal... it is a fact that until the Party reaches government, we are not able to investigate any further enquiries.' Like everybody else suffering injustice the Four are supposed to grow old waiting for the increasingly unlikely advent of a Labour government. And even then all this Labour government would do is to undertake 'lengthy research'.

The four are serving some of the longest sentences handed out by a British court. The knowledge that they may indeed have to serve these sentences is appalling. All of them have suffered ill-health as a result. Now is the time to pile on the pressure and to let Hurd know that, whatever the Appeal Court decides, their supporters will not rest until they are released. ■

## Windlesham Inquiry

# Death on the Rock

MAXINE WILLIAMS

The Windlesham Inquiry into the *Death on the Rock* TV programme about the Gibraltar 3 murders has vindicated Thames TV and the programme. The report found that the programme did not prejudice the inquest, did not bribe, bully or misrepresent witnesses and was impartial. This, coming from Windlesham, a former Tory minister for Northern Ireland, is a blow for Thatcher and her government. Thatcher's government has responded with a point-blank and furious rejection of Windlesham's findings. He had evidently joined the ever growing ranks of those Thatcher regards as the 'enemy'.

The inquiry was set up by the IBA because of intense government anger at the showing of *Death on the Rock*, the only searching journalistic investigation into the events in Gibraltar. When it was shown, Margaret Thatcher accused Thames of 'trial by television and guilt by accusation.' The government intervened directly to try to stop the programme being shown. When this failed, they used the excuse of Kenneth Asquez, a witness who first claimed he saw Sean Savage shot on the ground but at the inquest gave confused, contradictory and bizarre evidence. Instead of asking what had frightened Asquez out of his wits the finger of accusation was pointed at *Death on the Rock* for using his original testimony.

A great deal was at stake for the government. *Death on the Rock* not only produced eyewitnesses (some of whom the police had failed to find) to say that the three were shot without warning with their hands up but also that they were finished off as they lay dying on the ground. This exposed the reality of SAS murder in Gibraltar. Moreover, the programme produced overwhelming evidence of the fact that the three were under continuous surveillance in Spain right up to the Gibraltar border. This gave

the lie to government claims that the three managed to slip unexpectedly into Gibraltar. It also produced expert evidence on the fact that the suspect (but non-existent) car-bomb, the pretext for shooting the three, could have easily been seen not to be a car-bomb at all. These three revelations wiped out the entire government case for shooting the three.

Most of the media were content to accept the government story and in some cases, such as the Murdoch press, to act as government disinformation machines. *Death on the Rock* shone out like a gem on a dungheap. Hence government fury. But it was not just the government that went for the programme, so did other newspapers. *The Independent*, that had itself used Asquez's statement about seeing Savage shot on the ground, attacked *Death on the Rock* for doing so. *The Sunday Times* launched a crusade against the programme. Now, however, three of its own journalists have attacked the paper's Gibraltar coverage and said that their reports were re-written and distorted to bolster the government's case. No doubt there will be no independent inquiry into the *Sunday Times* coverage. Nor into the fact that its sister paper the *Sun* had to pay substantial damages to witness Carmen Proetta for printing outright lies about her.

Two weeks before his death, Terry O'Halloran wrote that: 'The attack on *Death on the Rock* served to distract attention from the real question of government directed murder in Gibraltar and soften up public opinion for the ban on broadcasting interviews with Sinn Féin. It is part of a general campaign to eliminate all serious questioning or critical reporting of what the British government is up to in Ireland. Despite Windlesham's exoneration of Thames TV, that campaign continues. ■

The quote from Terry O'Halloran is taken from a forthcoming *FRFI* pamphlet Gibraltar: Getting Away With Murder.

## US shoots down Libyan jets

# US terrorism

CAROL BRICKLEY

On 5 January US F14 jets shot down two Libyan MiG-23 jets over international waters in the Mediterranean. There was no excuse. It was simply murder.

The Libyan jets had been in the air just 14 minutes. The US claimed that the Libyans attacked its aircraft but when it boiled down to the facts, the US could only claim that they were being followed. The US have suffered such paranoia before; in 1988 they claimed to have been attacked by an Iranian passenger aircraft, which was then shot down murdering hundreds of civilians. The US record of terrorism gives Libya every reason to be circumspect about US air-

craft in its vicinity.

In the weeks following the Lockerbie plane crash in December, both Reagan and President-elect George Bush threatened vengeance on those who had caused the crash. All eyes turned to the Middle East, and some sort of revenge attack was high on the agenda for January. The Libyans knew, from past experience, that in the absence of any real evidence about the culprits, Libya would be chosen as a substitute.

In March 1986 US jets attacked coastal radar installations in Libya, sinking four patrol boats. A month later, having manufactured 'irrefutable evidence' that Libya was involved in the bombing of US servicemen in a West Berlin nightclub, Reagan sent the bombers to attack Tripoli



and Benghazi, murdering many civilians. Later, the 'irrefutable evidence' turned out to be a farago of lies.

In January this year, Reagan and Bush were already building pressure against Colonel Gaddafi using 'irrefutable evidence' that Libya has built a chemical warfare factory in Rabta, 40 miles south west of Tripoli. The Libyans stated that it is a pharmaceutical factory and have invited

experts to view the site. Ah... said the US... pharmaceutical factories can be transformed into chemical warfare factories at the drop of a hat! They should know, of course, since they probably produce and hold the world's largest stock of chemical and neurological weapons, from the effects of which Vietnam still suffers. Quite rightly, the Libyans viewed the US furore as the prelude to a military attack.

Not that the USA is against chemical warfare conducted by small nations. Both Britain and the USA vetoed a UN Security Council resolution condemning Iraq's use of gas to murder thousands of Kurdish people.

It is only the small nations which make a stand against imperialism which need to be bombed into line.

What the US would like to be seen as the actions of an avenging angel, are in reality merciless terrorism of a butchering nation using its trigger-happy military superiority to intimidate its opponents. ■

## Arms cuts

On 19 January the Soviet Union announced unilateral withdrawal of some short range tactical nuclear weapons in Europe and called on NATO to abandon its 'modernisation programme' plans for Europe's short range nuclear weapons.

NATO's plans for 'modernisation' are being fiercely promoted by the USA and Britain; 'modernisation' is the term used to cover the renewal of Europe's stock of nuclear missiles following the withdrawal of cruise and Pershing missiles under the INF Agreement. Since INF, the Soviet Union has led the way with disarmament proposals, whereas Britain and the USA are determined to impose new weapons on Europe in the face of opposition from some of its NATO allies: West Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Norway and Spain. ■

## News Notes

### Food for thought

The issue of the food we are forced to consume has been rumbling on ever since Edwina Currie announced that 'most of the egg production of this country is infected with salmonella'. Under immense pressure to offer a different version, Currie has retracted her statement saying that she meant hens not eggs and anyway it was misreported (didn't we hear her say it on the tele?). It took Mrs C nearly two months to break silence following her resignation and had cost the government (ie us) millions in compensation.

The press continue to refer to the salmonella 'scare'. But the facts tell that this is no scare story. A total of 24,123 cases of salmonella were reported in 1988 - a dramatic rise on previous years, and it is accepted that this is only the tip of the iceberg. The government has refused to name the 21 protein processing plants known to be supplying salmonella contaminated feed, and Mrs Thatcher has refused to break up the Ministry of Agriculture in order to defend consumers' interests: 'farmers are consumers' she proclaimed.

Meanwhile a new bacteria, listeria, is spreading. A study by Dr Lacey, Leeds University microbiologist (who told the truth about salmonella long before Mrs C), found a quarter of pre-cooked food contained the bacteria. Recently two new born babies have died from massive listeria infections after their mothers ate contaminated food, eg a sandwich. Minister of Agriculture, John MacGregor (who has ulcers), declared that the ministry had no evidence of disease caused by pre-cooked chilled food.

'Let them eat cake!' said Marie Antoinette. This year is the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution.

### Numbers to note

There were 449 deaths from hypothermia from October 1987 to March 1988 (a mild winter). 23,200 council houses were built in 1987 compared with 89,300 in 1979.

### Arms for democracy

'To some of the Western countries that question democracy in Cuba we can say: there can't be a democracy superior to that in which the workers, the peasants and the students have the weapons. They have the weapons.'

'To all those Western countries that question democracy in Cuba we can say: give weapons to the workers, give weapons to the peasants, give weapons to the students, and we'll see whether tear gas will be hurled against any strike, against any organisation that struggles for peace, against students; whether the police can be ordered to attack them while wearing masks and all those contrivances... whether the dogs can be turned loose on the masses every time there's a strike or a peace demonstration or a people's struggle. I believe that the supreme test of democracy is arming the people.'

Fidel Castro



# International terrorist

Look at Reagan: rouged cheeks, dyed hair, familiar catchphrases, smiling, lights angled to soften the years... and Nancy. Today's mass murderer requires a heavy disguise. Reagan was empowered by the US military industrial complex and headed the most powerful instrument of war and terror the world has ever seen. He was no comic. He signed the orders that sent thousands to their death every year he was in office. Nobody dusted themselves down and walked out of the studio from Sabra and Shatila. The crippled children of Angola and Nicaragua will not suddenly break into a run now that he has gone. Ronald Reagan is a terrorist and only the gratitude of the US millionaire class preserves him from justice.

Reagan took over the Presidency in January 1981, with the US ruling class determined to reverse the defeats imperialism had suffered over the previous decade. Global counter-revolution was launched combining a \$2 trillion (1 trillion = 1,000 billion) military build-up in nuclear and conventional weapons with 'low intensity warfare', including open military support for counter-revolutionary gangs in South East Asia, Afghanistan, southern Africa and Central America. On 5 December Reagan signed an Executive Order on US Intelligence Activities removing restrictions placed on the CIA in the aftermath of Watergate. 'Plausibly deniable' operations became a trademark of the Reagan years. On 3 April 1984 Reagan signed National Security Directive 138: permission was granted for 'preventative raids' on countries labelled as 'terrorist havens'. Barbarism enshrined in law. KAL 007, Iran Air Flight 655, the mining of Nicaraguan harbours, car bombs in Beirut, the raid on Tripoli, shells the size of Volkswagens pounding into Lebanon

ese villages, gun running, drug running, the invasion of Grenada... all became legitimate means of US foreign policy.

The imperialists' strategy was to use the arms build-up to wear the Soviet economy down, throw the socialist countries onto the defensive and thereby weaken their ability and resolve to support the newly liberated countries and national liberation movements. 'Low intensity war' was designed to disrupt the economy and force a 'political reorientation' within the target country. Thatcher proved to be Reagan's major accomplice in this strategy. 'The responsibility for freedom is ours to share. In Britain you will find an ally, valiant, staunch and true'. (Thatcher on her first visit to President Reagan, February 1981).

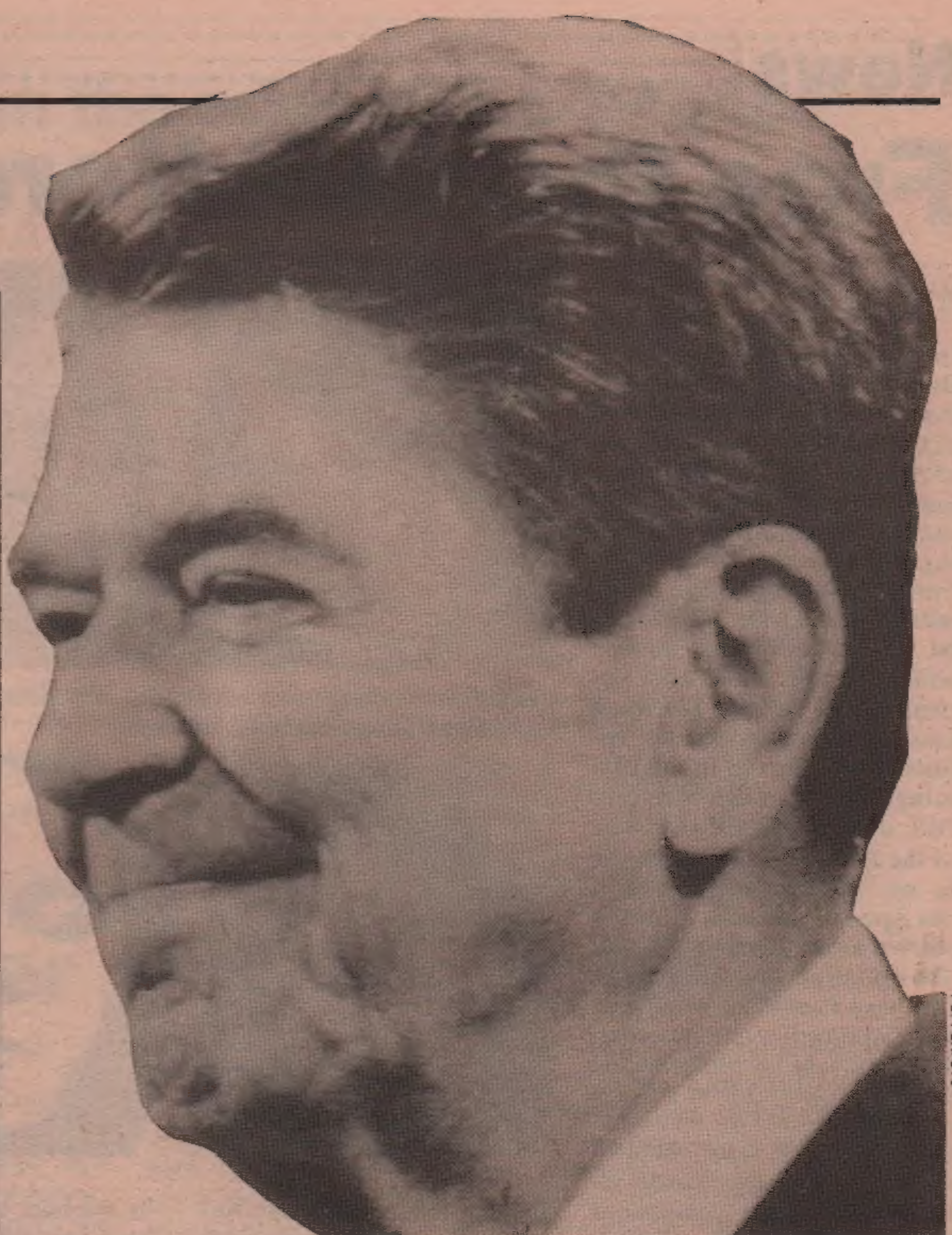
They have had only partial success. At the beginning of 1989 Nicaragua, Kampuchea, Vietnam, Angola and Afghanistan are all in the process of negotiating with counter-revolutionaries who serve US and British capitalism. The Grenadian revolution was destroyed. But, crucially,

the Central American revolution has not been defeated; the Latin American debt at over \$400 billion threatens to explode the imperialists' financial system and drive the continent towards revolution; the combined Cuban and Angolan forces broke the teeth of the South African Defence Force; the South African revolution aims at the very heart of capital; the Philippines armed struggle continues; Haiti, South Korea and Burma have all been rocked by mass movements; the *intifada* proclaims Palestine is and will be!

## CENTRAL AMERICA

After \$6 billion of US, mainly military, aid procuring some 140,000 deaths in Central America during eight years of Reagan's rule, the Sandinistas are still in power as the contras disintegrate. The FMLN control much of El Salvador while the local bourgeoisie are squabbling and US counter-revolutionary strategy is in crisis, and General Noriega remains in command in Panama: a defiant symbol of the failure of Reagan's Central American policy. This is that policy in practice: on 11 December 1982 the US-trained Atlacatl brigade entered Mozote village and murdered 472 of the 500 villagers. On 28 January 1983 Reagan announced that El Salvador satisfied the US Congress' human rights requirements, and that military aid to the Duarte regime would be increased. Seventy thousand El Salvadoreans have been murdered by Reagan's 'human rights' record.

'The whole El Salvador insurgency is run out of Managua by profes-



POPPER/OTO

sionals experienced in directing guerrilla wars' (Reagan's former CIA Director William Casey); Nicaragua is 'a cancer that must be removed' (Ronald Reagan). Reagan personally ordered the mining of Nicaraguan harbours, personally directed Honduras to release arms to the contras, 'the moral equivalent of our founding fathers', personally requested Saudi Arabia to double its donations to the contras when US official military aid was officially illegal (November

1984-April 1986), and yet could not remember whether he had sanctioned the drugs-for-guns trade known as Irangate, blown out of the Nicaraguan skies with CIA operative Eugene Hasenfus on 5 October 1986. Reagan's war on Nicaragua has claimed 40,000 casualties, the equivalent of 3 million citizens in the USA. Only divisions in the US ruling class, and fear of the consequences, prevented Reagan launching an all-out invasion of Nicaragua. ■



The 1986 bombing raid on Tripoli killed dozens of Libyans

## Inside the glittering rubbish tip

'Greed is all right, by the way. I want you to know that. I think greed is healthy. You can be greedy and still feel good about yourself'. (Ivan Boesky)

During Reagan's rule the USA became the world's largest debtor, and the position of largest creditor, which it had held since World War I, was taken over by Japan. Greed, a grotesque addiction to consumerism among the US elite and middle classes, was being fed by government borrowing to the tune of \$2 billion a week over the last four years.

Instalment purchases made on credit more than doubled to \$660 billion under Reagan. Credit card debt exploded from \$50 billion in 1981 to \$180 billion today. Spending on Lincoln convertibles and cut-flowers has trebled, on foreign holidays and boats it has doubled. Meanwhile, every week the US imports \$3 billion worth of goods more than it exports. In one six month period in 1984 the US economy absorbed \$160 billion drawn out of Europe and Japan. That money was attracted by high US interest rates. Every single percentage rise in US interest rates drew another \$4 billion out of Latin America. The intoxicated spending that formed the basis of Reagan's US popularity was paid for by the rest of the world. By the summer of 1987 over 100 of Reagan's administration had been investigated for corruption. Covert operations spilled out of the White House, across Wall Street and into private bank deposits: an empire visibly rotting.

Reagan launched a vicious attack on large sections of the US working class. Estimates suggest that of the 10.8 million people who were made unemployed during Reagan's first year of office a third are still out of work, over a half are in new jobs earning less than 80 per cent of their previous wage, and one in ten are doing

part-time jobs. Unemployment compensation was cut by a third. Thirty five million US citizens live in poverty.

A Harvard University study shows that the average US family is just four months away from living on the streets if the main breadwinner loses his or her job. Whole families are forced to sell their possessions and drift like nomads from town to town in search of work, selling their blood to pay for petrol, sleeping in cars, waking up to an American nightmare of some five million homeless. New York has 100,000 homeless people, Chicago 30,000; almost every US town has homeless, hungry, desperate people. Their average age is 34. Reagan declared that they were homeless 'you might say, by choice'. They are labelled and damned as crazy, alcoholic, drugged; they have 'personal problems'. Fifty per cent of the homeless are black or Hispanic people. Vietnam war veterans make up half of all homeless males. A third are families. In New York City alone, 4 million people have been evicted from their homes since 1970.

'US Drug Officials Say Speed is Out of Control' (Headline, New York Times, November 1988)

Sixty per cent of the world's narcotic production is consumed in the USA.

It is an industry worth over \$140 billion a year, exceeded only by the arms, food and automobile industries. Reagan, the world's biggest terrorist, howls about terrorism around the world, condemns Cuba and Nicaragua as drug pushers while his own National Security Council under Poindexter and North use CIA owned planes to ferry cocaine into Florida.

Out of the cocaine and crack are spawned the gangs that roam the poorer quarters of US cities, sixteen year olds armed with AK-49s, prisoners of a cult of violence spewed out of the TV and cinema. Ambushes, executions and shoot-outs claimed 341 lives on the streets of Washington, the capital city, in the first eleven months of 1988. The US working class are not going to make a revolution half-lobotomised by drugs, gunning each other down. The poison never flowed more freely than under Reagan.

This is the USA, Reagan's 'shining city on a hill', stripped of its neon and tinsel, an inferno fuelled with the hopes and lives of millions of people. A land that saw a prison building boom, with 626 new prisons under construction at one time. A land that saw the number of executions rise tenfold in the first five years of Reagan's rule; where half the people on death row are black, when black people form only twelve per cent of the population; where half of all black babies are born into poverty. Last year Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition campaign showed that the dispossessed, the victims, could be mobilised. That mobilisation in solidarity with the victims of imperialist international terrorism is painfully long in coming. It must come. ■

This page was written by TREVOR RAYNE



# ★ Viraj Mendis kidnapped, deported, but still fighting

In the early hours of Wednesday 18 January, Greater Manchester police raided the Church of the Ascension and kidnapped Viraj Mendis. After being held in Pentonville Prison for 47 hours, he was taken to Gatwick airport, and deported to Sri Lanka. The entire operation was of a type that the British state reserves for opponents it fears most. From the moment it laid hands on him to the last minutes on the plane, the British state tried to degrade and humiliate Viraj. They tried to smash our comrade's spirit. But they failed.

At 7.30am, 13 police vehicles brought around 100 police to the church. The building was quickly surrounded, and phone-lines (though thanks to Manchester police bungling, the wrong phone-lines) were cut. Using 'community copper' Geoff Holmes as a front-man, the police got into the church via the rectory at the back.

Fifteen police officers then rushed in search of Viraj equipped to overcome any obstacle. They first smashed a bolted glass door. They then got to the reinforced door to the sacristy where Viraj had been sleeping. The door was removed - and half the wall with it - with a pneumatic drill. While two police women grabbed hold of campaign



Viraj is forcibly taken in his pyjamas from the Church of the Ascension, Hulme

stewards Karen and Tracy, a police officer cut through the handcuffs with which Viraj had locked himself to a radiator. The thugs then dragged Viraj, still in his pyjamas, into a waiting police van outside.

In the five minutes it took to take him to Stretford police station, Viraj was assaulted. At Stretford, he was transferred to a convoy of four police cars which drove at 120mph down the hard shoulder of the motorway to London.

By 10am, just two-and-a-half hours after the abduction, Viraj was in Pentonville Prison. A prisoner's

relative who witnessed Viraj's internment commented that she had not seen such an operation organised to deal with one prisoner since a senior Mafia member had been held in Pentonville before his extradition.

In Pentonville Viraj was denied rights accorded to ordinary prisoners. He was held in isolation in the hospital wing. He was kept in his underpants for a large amount of the time, in handcuffs some of the time. During the night, the lights were constantly on. Abuse and taunts were hurled at him by prison offic-

ers - 'Tomorrow you'll be dead'; 'There's another black bastard gone'. The sole purpose of this treatment was to terrorise and humiliate Viraj. Only on the second day of his detention was he allowed visitors - his solicitor, David Burgess, campaign members Karen and Adrian, and MPs Bob Litherland, Jeremy Corbyn and Keith Vaz.

On 8.45 on Friday morning, Viraj was handcuffed once again and taken in another massive convoy to the airport police station at Gatwick. After lengthy argument Karen and David Burgess were allowed to see

Viraj for their last visit. Some time later Viraj was handcuffed to two detective inspectors from Manchester, placed inside a re-inforced prison vehicle and put onto the Air Lanka plane.

The plane - packed-out by the press and with one supporter, Father Henry West from the Church of the Ascension - took off at 12.40pm. During the flight, Viraj was stopped from talking to Father Henry. When all the passengers disembarked at Zurich, Viraj was kept handcuffed on board in contravention of international law. Only when the plane touched down in Colombo were Viraj's handcuffs removed. After four years of fighting for his right to remain in Britain, after spending 2 years in sanctuary, the police officers and immigration officials now told him he was 'free' to go where he liked.

The British state did not dare slacken its grip until the minute it had got him where it wanted him - in Sri Lanka, 5000 miles away. His treatment, Viraj tells us, was 'horrendous'. But it failed to bend his spirit. Viraj Mendis is a communist whose will to fight against injustice and oppression cannot be crushed by their brutality. In his last message before he was deported Viraj said:

'The struggle in Britain must continue. Don't mourn. Turn your tears into action. Organise!'

Sarah Ricca  
RCG member and Secretary of the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign

in Sri Lanka to prolong his stay in Britain', that his 'claims about Sri Lanka' were 'not true'.

In a statement to his supporters and to the press in Britain on 28 January 1989, Viraj says:

'The media has cynically twisted my statement of 26 January 1989 to give it a meaning exactly opposite to that intended... When I said some of the claims I made were wrong, I was referring to the intricacies of the political situation and not to the general pattern... My earlier statements about the dangers in Sri Lanka were inaccurate only in that they underestimated the number of people who are under threat. When in Britain, I believed that the main chauvinist force came from the JVP. I now believe chauvinism to be far more widespread. I now believe that the situation in Sri Lanka is even worse than I believed when I was in Britain.'

The British press has consistently lied about the political situation in Sri Lanka. If they are able to discredit the VMDC they will not only further endanger Viraj in Sri Lanka, they will also damage the movement against deportations in Britain. This is their aim. Our aim is to defeat them.

## Home Office and press attempt to discredit VMDC

The Home Office had all along planned to end Viraj's sanctuary by a snatch and kidnap operation and had no intention whatsoever of allowing Viraj to go to a third country. The Thatcher government was determined on revenge because of the VMDC's two years of resistance. It was intent on undermining and destroying this powerful focus of organised anti-racist struggle led by the Revolutionary Communist Group.

On 21 December 1988, the Law Lords rejected Viraj's petition to have his case heard by the House of Lords. A Home Office raid on the sanctuary became imminent.

Due to the enormous support the VMDC enjoyed, the Home Office made an offer agreeing not to raid and arrest Viraj if he in turn began searching for a third country. Viraj accepted this offer and on 6 January instructed his solicitors to begin work.

Unfortunately, despite the RCG leadership's advice and that of many VMDC committee members,

Viraj did not wish to make this agreement public. A public statement would have strengthened the VMDC's hand enormously. It would have shown that the Home Office had doubts about returning Viraj to Sri Lanka, and was unsure about a clash with the VMDC and the Church.

The Home Office realised the blunder it had made, and before the VMDC could complete discussion on making a public statement it retracted the offer. On Friday 13 January, a Home Office official phoned the Bishop of Manchester

and told him that no agreement had ever been made.

The Home Office realised that only a full scale assault on the sanctuary and deporting Viraj directly to Sri Lanka could have a chance of seriously threatening the VMDC's standing. So from Friday 13 January it put the finishing touches for its police operation against the sanctuary. The plan was to totally defeat and humiliate the VMDC.

In this exercise, the government had and continues to have the full co-operation of the press.

### RACIST PRESS ENGAGES IN DIRTY TRICKS CAMPAIGN

Since Viraj's return to Sri Lanka, the press has continued its efforts to discredit and slander him and the VMDC. On 26 January, seizing on ambiguities in a statement he made for the Sri Lankan press, the British press howled out that Viraj had made a 'U-turn', that he 'had apologised' for 'using the troubles



A 'minimum of force': the damaged sanctuary after police raid.

★ NO TO RACIST DEPORTATIONS!



# Massive protests at kidnap

The largest mass popular protest against a deportation from Britain took place in the two days following Viraj's abduction. The protest forced Viraj's case onto the front pages of the media and onto the main radio and TV news bulletins. It forced a major Parliamentary debate on the issue and even individuals from the British ruling class to act to support Viraj. EDDIE ABRAHAMS, ZOE GOODMAN and ED JONES report.

Within fifteen minutes of the police raid over 60 supporters reached the sanctuary after breaching a tight police cordon. By 9am, 700 supporters began a march to the City Centre. Once there, led by an RCG banner, they staged a sit down blocking traffic in Piccadilly for over 20 minutes.

As the Manchester demonstrators alerted people in the city, all across the country supporters began to respond. According to British Telecom 70 per cent of all telexes sent on Wednesday 18 January were to Douglas Hurd protesting against the police operation. The Home Office had to obtain seven extra fax machines to cope with the public outrage.

In London the RCG took responsibility for organising the response and put a picket on the Home Office as a prelude to the 300 strong picket of Downing Street that same evening and a 24 hour picket of Pentonville prison beginning at 1pm on Thursday. Protests were also organised in Sheffield, Bristol, Norwich, Newcastle and Birmingham.

The tide of opposition was so strong that the Tories could not avoid a Parliamentary debate on Wednesday afternoon. To justify his action Douglas Hurd had to trot out the usual lies claiming Viraj had had a fair hearing in British courts and that he was not aware of any arrangements for Viraj to go to a third country. Tory backbenchers displayed their normal hooliganism: 'this aged student', 'charlatan', 'criminal' and other epithets accompanied calls for Viraj's immediate deportation. Both the Labour Party and the SLD criticised the kidnapping and Tony Benn said that it was an attack on the black community as a whole.

Twice, on Wednesday and Thursday, VMDC activists, eight in all, disrupted Parliamentary proceedings to bring Viraj's case to everyone's attention.

On Wednesday night 1500 people crammed into the Church and raised £1200 for Viraj. Later that evening 3,000 angry people marched to Moss

Side Police Station demanding Viraj's release and the lifting of the deportation order against him. Throughout the day, Manchester police held back from arresting anyone - assessing the anger and rage they feared any action by them could spark an uprising.

The next morning, 30 supporters led by the Liverpool anarchists organised a 24 hour occupation of the local Immigration and Nationality Centre. Protests also continued in London, Newcastle, Norwich, Birmingham, Leicester and Sheffield and elsewhere.

There was no mistaking the mood of the ordinary people of Britain. On the Thursday night TV *Question Time* programme 60 per cent of the audience voted to oppose the Home Office treatment of Viraj.

It was not surprising that the ruling class and the Home Office wanted to deport Viraj as rapidly as possible. In the days following the kidnapping the VMDC succeeded in uniting in action the broad democratic force it had built under the leadership of the RCG. Thousands of ordinary working class people were joined, in action, by anti-racist organisations, by trade unionists from the T&G, NALGO, MSF, NUPE and others, MPs such as Tony Benn, Keith Vaz, Simon Hughes (for the SLD) and others, by religious organisations, Bishops, priests, Lords, by women's, gay and lesbian organisations, as well as contingents from the SWP, RCP, Socialist Organisation and other socialist groups.

While Viraj remained in Britain, this force could become a serious challenge to the Home Office - thus the decision to deport him within 48 hours despite the imminence of a third country solution. As Viraj was being put on the plane and deported on Friday morning, 300 protestors at Gatwick airport heard RCG speakers quote murdered American socialist Joe Hill - 'Don't mourn, organise'. 'The legacy of the VMDC cannot be destroyed,' the demonstrators were told, 'if we continue to organise and fight against deportations.'

## DEFEND THE GATWICK SEVEN

Seven supporters of Viraj Mendis defiantly broke security at Gatwick airport during a protest against the deportation of Viraj.

Five supporters were arrested in the morning after coming within yards of the Air Lanka plane which had Viraj aboard, handcuffed to two Manchester policemen. The protesters were charged under a Gatwick bylaw prohibiting access to a restricted area.

Later today, the five, two long-standing RCG supporters, were arrested and charged with three offences: obstructing a police officer, obstructing a police officer and obstructing a police officer.

six pleaded not guilty; the seventh, Joseph Harris from Faslane Peace Camp, decided to defend himself. When asked to plead, he said: 'There are some mistakes on my charge sheet: first, it should read "Margaret Thatcher, Douglas Hurd and Timothy Renton"; second, the charge should read "conspiracy to murder".'

A minute's silence was called in honour of Viraj before the case was adjourned till 18 February.

We will fight for Viraj's release and against all forms of racism.

SECRET TO ALL NEWS

REPORT BY THE GATWICK SEVEN

REPORT BY THE GATWICK SEVEN

REPORT BY THE GATWICK SEVEN

REPORT BY THE GATWICK SEVEN



The sit down protest in the centre of Manchester within hours of the police raid on the Sanctuary

## They were determined to deport him

The Home Office cynically worked to sabotage every effort to get Viraj to a third country.

CHRIS PROCTOR

On 6 January 1989, Viraj had instructed his lawyers to begin searching for a third country. This was communicated to the Home Office which had already agreed not to raid the sanctuary while the search continued. In the following week applications were made to the Dutch, Danish and Swedish embassies and investigations begun about prospects elsewhere.

The Home Office was fully aware of this activity. Yet it reneged on its agreement and kidnapped Viraj from the Church on 18 January. Immediately it gave the campaign an ultimatum - find a third country by 12 noon on 20 January or Viraj Mendis will be deported to Sri Lanka on the 12.15pm Air Lanka flight.

Despite enormous difficulties, the Danish Embassy informed the Archbishop of Canterbury that Viraj's chances were good. This was on the day after the kidnapping - Thursday 19 January. On the same day, Viraj received an offer for refuge from the German state of Bremen (whilst the Federal Government must issue the visa, German states have the power to accept refugees) and was awaiting the outcome of negotiations for a Federal Government visa. At one stage on the same day, the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, Joe Brown, volunteered to accept him.

With a little more time a third country would have been secured. All this the Home Office knew. Yet they repeatedly refused to extend the deadline even by an hour. On Thursday 19 January, the Archbishop of Canterbury wrote to the Cabinet requesting more time. The request was rejected. That same evening Renton categorically rejected a plea from Viraj's MP Bob Litherland for an extension of the Friday noon deadline. Now that Viraj was in their clutches, the Home Office were determined to pursue their campaign right to the end.

On the morning of 20 January, as the deadline approached, Renton stated that the offer from Bremen wasn't adequate. Half an hour before the deadline, at 11.30am, John van Tilborg (Dutch MEP) telephoned the Home Office informing them that the visa from the German Federal Government was forthcoming. Renton's secretary responded by saying that Viraj would be put on the plane and then put the phone down.

Minutes before the plane took off, it could still have been halted, the Bremen offer with all guarantees was on Renton's desk in writing. But no action was taken. Having made their decision the Home Office let the plane take off. ■

Chris Proctor is an RCG member and Chair of the VMDC

## What supporters said

'If this is an indication of the methods that the Government is prepared to use on the people of this country then I fear greatly for our basic freedoms, for justice, and for respect for religious and social values.'

Father John Methuen

'This (the raid and kidnap) will not surprise anyone who has had any knowledge of Britain's involvement in Ireland.'

Gerry Adams, President of Sinn Fein

'The NUM protests most vehemently at the violent arrest and . . . deportation of Mr Viraj Mendis. Given the present British Government's stance of acquiescence towards the apartheid regime in South Africa, the actions against Mr Mendis will be judged as a blatant act of racism.'

Peter Heathfield, Secretary of NUM

'This (the raid and kidnap) has got to be the most disgraceful episode in the whole term of this Government.'

Harry Barnes, Labour MP

'To send Viraj Mendis back to Sri Lanka is a brutal act of state power . . . I can only thank the vicar, the parishioners and the friends and supporters of Viraj Mendis for their courage and endurance. They have stood up for human rights when other people simply talked about them.'

Bruce Kent, CND

'Conditions in Sri Lanka are extremely dangerous for a man such as Viraj and I hope that he will not be sent back there.'

Bishop of Manchester, 18 January 1989

'Viraj Mendis' life would be in jeopardy in Sri Lanka. He would not last very long. Either the government or the death squads would get him.'

Eddie Newman, Member of European Parliament

'The decision to arrest Mr Mendis, who has lived here for 15 years, and has been very active in immigration cases, will be seen as an attack on the black community . . . It showed that the policy of the government was odious and hypocritical'

Tony Benn MP, House of Commons, 19 January, 1989

PAUL MATTHEWSON

1985:

1986:

GERARD LIVETT

Eddie

CHARLIE BAKER

Many



# history of the struggle



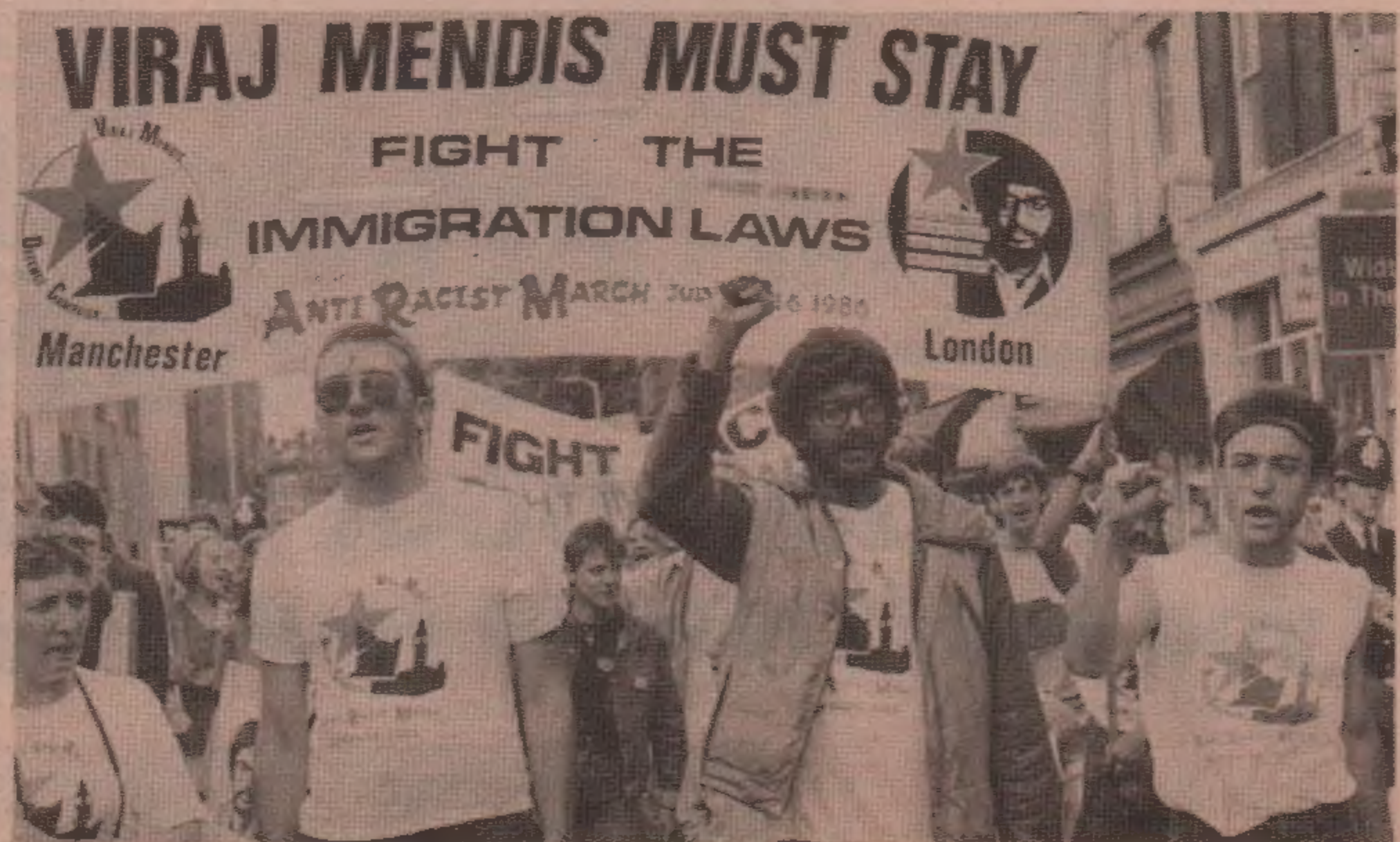
Viraj on the march against deportations alongside other campaigns



1985: Viraj protesting against apartheid outside the South African Embassy



Viraj, Anwar Ditta and Chris Proctor announce the Long March



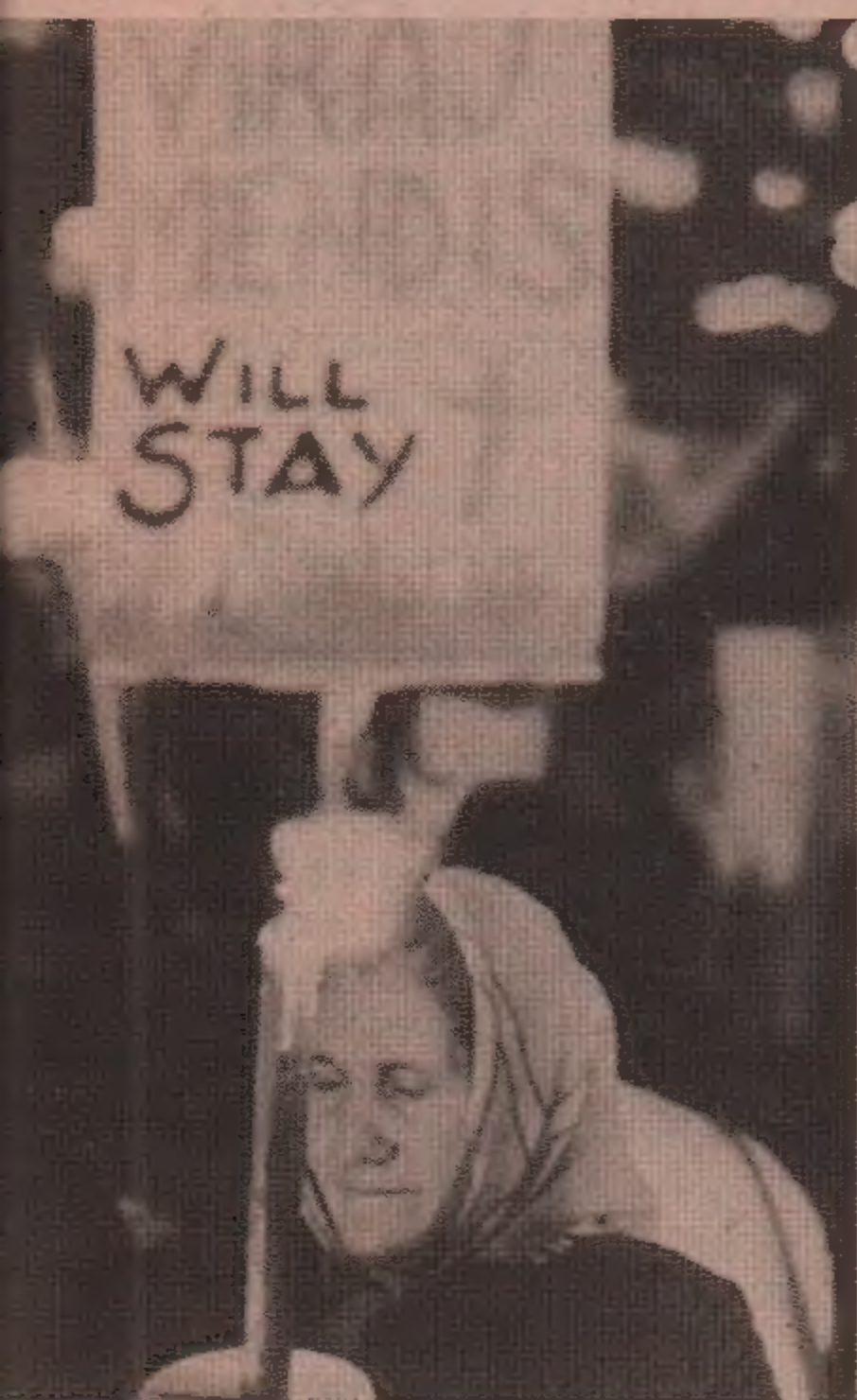
The VMDC on the Long March from Manchester to London



Viraj at work in the Sanctuary



Demonstrators at Gatwick when Viraj is deported



People, young and old, support Viraj

'Clearly the RCG have played a central role in the Defence Campaign and, given the experience of many campaigns led by aspirant vanguards, this could have been a fatal flaw. In fact one of the reasons that the campaign has been able to sustain a broad alliance... is that the RCG is committed to open and democratic organisation... This means that although members of the RCG retain a commitment to the RCG's collective line, this is expressed and argued openly alongside the perspectives of other groups.'

Janet Batsleer in *Critical Social Policy* (No 22, Summer 1988)

## POLICE FRAME TWO MILITANTS WITH CONSPIRACY

Sometime on the night of Friday 20 January, the date Viraj was deported, the Sri Lankan High Commission was painted over with slogans saying 'Viraj Mendis Will Return'. A Rolls Royce parked outside was also splashed with paint.

Having no 'suspects' for this action, the police arrested and framed RCG member Dominic and City AA activist Jay. Both comrades' homes were raided and they were kept in detention over the weekend. Appearing in court on Monday 23 January, they were charged with conspiracy to cause criminal damage.

Dominic and Jay will be appearing in court again on 16 March. Come and support them. Don't let the police get away with a frame up which could land our comrades in jail. ■



The VMDC marches through Manchester



The Khan family now in Sanctuary



## Viraj's life in danger

Viraj is a prisoner on the island of Sri Lanka. He is being prevented from leaving the country.

Despite a statement from the High Commissioner in London, that Viraj would be free to come and go as he pleases, and despite statements by immigration officials at Colombo airport, Viraj is being denied a passport.

These statements were used by the Tory government to justify the deportation of Viraj. They have proved to be lies. We demand that Viraj be given a passport or travel papers immediately.

## What the racists said

'I am most relieved he has been taken from the church. We have been campaigning for this for some time.'

Racist Tory Councillor John Kershaw

'What I want to know is why this man was allowed to stay here so long.'

Terry Dicks, Tory MP

'I do not believe it is reasonable to delay action simply because it is alleged that this prospect (of torture, persecution and death) might still exist. We have no evidence that the prospect exists.'

Douglas Hurd, House of Commons 19 January 1989

This man is a charlatan who lives in a Walter Mitty world. I hope he will be deported forthwith.'

Michael Morris, Tory MP

'The Church has done considerable harm to itself. The idea of sanctuary is when you protect people against the abuse of power. The power has all been on Mr Mendis's side... The sad thing is that the Bishop (of Manchester) and the vicar (Father John) have been trying to fight the courts.'

John Gummer, Local Government Minister and member of the Church of England General Synod



## Hattersley: the reluctant anti-racist

**While many Labour Party members, inside and outside Parliament, acted like comrades in struggle, the leadership displayed its usual indifference and racism.**

Gerald Kaufman, Labour Shadow Foreign Secretary, for example, refused to inform the Home Office that Gibraltar's Chief Minister was prepared to accept Viraj - on the grounds that the offer had not been sanctioned by the British-appointed Governor General.

But Deputy Leader Hattersley sunk to the worst depths. His protests in Parliament on Wednesday 18 January were exposed as no more than hypocritical efforts to win a few votes and score a point against the government. This was exposed in a disgusting article he wrote for the *Guardian* on Saturday 21 January, the day after Viraj was deported. Maggie Mellon, a VMDC supporter, in a letter also published in the *Guardian*, wrote:

'Mr Hattersley's "support" for Viraj Mendis is too little, too late, - and too equivocal. He excuses himself for failing in this by claiming that Viraj and his supporters have only themselves to blame for having alienated his sympathies at a time when he could have lent his weight to the campaign. But he admitted that "dozens more deserving cases pass through his advice bureau each year - straight into the Immigration Detention Centre at Harmondsworth". It seems that black people cannot win with Mr Hattersley. If they quietly approach him for help they go "straight to the Immigration Detention Centre" and from there out of the country. If they "make nuisances of themselves outside Labour Party meetings" or elsewhere, he admits to an uncontrollable urge to "swat" them "with a rolled up newspaper".'

Hattersley's real target is Viraj's organisation, the RCG. He wants to support Viraj without giving either Viraj, his supporters, or most of all the RCG, any credit for battling for the last four years to prevent Viraj's deportation. It is the RCG which during the last General Election conducted a campaign against the Labour Party's racist and anti-Irish policies. It is the RCG which sells what Hattersley regards as 'bizarre political magazines'. We do not find it surprising that this defender of British imperialism should round on an organisation which has led the largest ever anti-deportation campaign in Britain - a campaign whose lessons pose a threat to the very foundations of British racism and immigration controls of which the Labour Party is an active supporter.

Readers should remember that this is not the first time that Hattersley has attacked Viraj. In May 1988 he made a racist joke about Viraj's sanctuary on Radio Four's News Quiz when he suggested that Richard Ingrams should 'play the organ and drive him out.'

★ NO TO RACIST DEPORTATIONS ★ NO TO RACIST DEPORTATIONS ★ NO TO RACIST DEPORTATIONS

# Press lies

Confronted with the massive popular protest, the bourgeois press set about its task of discrediting and slandering Viraj and the VMDC. Their aim was to isolate the anti-deportation movement, to detach the middle-classes who supported it and bury the legacy of the VMDC beneath a mountain of calumny. But first and foremost the ruling class sought to smash the idea of sanctuary. EDDIE ABRAHAMS and ED JONES report.



CHARLIE BAKER  
The Times put the ruling class position:

'In forcing their way into a Manchester church... to arrest Mr Mendis the police had also to break through this romantic idea of sanctuary behind which he had been defiantly sheltering.'

Then the justifications, dishonest, lying and hypocritical:

'... slim evidence failed to convince those he had to convince, including the United Nations High Commission for Refugees... Home Office (was) scrupulously fair. It is impossible to imagine what else it could have done... His continued presence in Britain under the spurious protection of sanctuary merely brought the law into contempt, inciting intimidation.'

**VIRAJ MENDIS WILL STAY!  
RE-OPEN THE CASE NOW**

Some of the many MPs who support Viraj's case

## The truth about Sri Lanka you won't read in your daily press

TREVOR RAYNE

**'Unless we kill every one of them, all talks are useless'.**

**'Bloody tools. They want violence. We give them violence. We will set them right by force'.**

These are the words of Ranasinghe Premadasa, the man elected President of Sri Lanka on 19 December 1988. He spoke them in 1986 regarding negotiations with the Tamil people. He was the chief beneficiary of the bogus 'Red Army' which appeared before the elections, which was recruited from and acted in concert with the Defence Ministry against suspected JVP sympathisers. British television showed the remains of their work before Christmas: smouldering human ashes at the road side.

During the months of November and December political killings among the Sinhalese population were running at thirty a day. After the election the British press suddenly went quiet about the slaughter: in the five days after the election 560 people were killed!



The north-east of Sri Lanka is occupied by the Indian Army



Tamil women and children are the victims of Sri Lanka's return to normal

The ex-SAS of KMS Ltd continue to serve with the Sri Lankan Special Task Force.

In his New Year's message Velupillai Prabhakaran, commander of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, described the plight of Sri Lanka and Tamil Eelam: 'About three quarters of Sri Lanka is today engulfed in Civil War. In the North and East 50-70,000 Indian troops have tried vainly, first to disarm and then capture and defeat the commandos of the LTTE. In the south... human

rights are non-existent... the UNP government has now legalised the state-orchestrated violence by abolishing the right of relatives to demand an autopsy or an inquiry into the murder of these innocent men, women, and children.'

Long Live Tamil Eelam. ■

The Secretary of State,  
Home Office,  
UK  
18 January 1989

Dear Sir,  
We regret the arrest of Mr Mendis and are extremely apprehensive of the conditions which await Viraj Mendis in Sri Lanka. As he firmly supported the Tamils struggle for the right to self-determination his life is very much in danger in Sri Lanka. The various Sinhala chauvinist elements are bent on destroying anyone who works for equality among nationalities in the Island. Thereby we, on behalf of the Tamils living in the UK, earnestly request the Government of United Kingdom not to send Mr Mendis to a certain death.  
Kuhan  
International Liaison Office  
Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)  
UK Branch

The gutter press followed suit in language it is accustomed to. It spared no insult in its efforts to whip up hatred for both Viraj and the VMDC as well as the RCG which led the entire campaign. Viraj was called a 'sponger', a 'swindler', a 'lefty' and a 'criminal'. He was accused of being a 'liar' and a 'fugitive'. They trotted out the usual heap of slanders uttered in Parliament and elsewhere: 'false marriage', 'failed student', 'full and fair hearing' and 'no danger in Sri Lanka'. The *Sun* accused the RCG of 'hijacking' the campaign behind the backs of the church congregation.

The mass protests were described 'rentamob fury' (*Daily Mail*) and we were told of 'riot after sanctuary migrant is arrested' (*Daily Express*) in which 'sick demonstrators' hurled 'ugly taunts' (*Manchester Evening News*) at the police. Day after day this slander was churned out.

The press also resorted to direct censorship. On the BBC Kilroy programme on Viraj's case broadcast live on 19 January, ten VMDC supporters had been invited to attend. However, just before it began, the producers suddenly decided that only two would be allowed in! One RCG member who had already been given his ticket had it snatched from him.

By Monday ruling class racism was not only echoed in the *Sun* which was shouting out 'Get lost spongers' and the *Daily Mail* which carried a full page slander, but also the *Independent* which joined the fray with a vicious editorial:

'There is reason to believe that Mr Mendis's belated espousal of the Tamil cause was as opportunistic as his brief marriage of convenience... to avoid deportation as an illegal immigrant... Mr Mendis was treated with some consideration by this country... He attempted to exploit the goodwill that exists in any decent society. In doing so he has made things more difficult for those who merit compassion.'

In the face of Viraj's stand and the broad united movement the VMDC built, the ruling class is moulding public opinion to build its own racist and reactionary united front: a united front which seizing on Viraj's deportation will attempt to escalate and intensify deportations and racist attacks on black people. In this moment of crisis, the bourgeois press revealed itself as what it always is and will be - the propaganda department of the capitalist class, of the racists and reactionaries.

Since Viraj's deportation, the press has been full of speculation and expectation that a 'major clampdown' is imminent against black people deemed to be 'illegal'. Without any comment the *Observer* (Sunday 22 January) reported plans for a 'police swoop on immigrants'. A Home Office source was quoted as saying 'everything had to wait until Mendis was out of the country. Now the word is out to go out and whack them. It's going to be like Mendis - snatched and deported within 48 hours.'

Not surprisingly, the bourgeois press is putting itself in the forefront of the tide of racist reaction which is following Viraj's deportation. ■

★ NO TO RACIST DEPORTATIONS! ★ NO TO RACIST DEPORTATIONS! ★ NO TO RACIST DEPORTATIONS!





Parkhurst Prison

# The privatisation of Britain's prisons

NICKI JAMESON

It now looks certain that Birmingham will be the site of the first privately constructed and administered remand centre. The government continues to toy with privatisation schemes such as the escorting of prisoners to and from court and for prison work but remand centres have emerged as the prime target for private enterprise.

The only privately-run penal institution in Britain today is the Harmondsworth Detention Centre, sit-

uated conveniently close to Heathrow and used to house asylum seekers and people awaiting deportation. Securicor, who run Harmondsworth, also administered the horrific Earl William prison ship which was moored off Harwich for 5 months until it was blown off its moorings by the violent storms of October 1987.

In 1985 when prison privatisation was first recommended to the government by the right-wing Adam Smith Institute, the idea was generally treated with scepticism. Four years later, as electricity and water are sold off, the ASI's allies include Conservative

MPs and functionaries and several large, specially-formed private consortia, most notably Contract Prisons plc which comprises developers Rosehaugh, security firm Racal Chubb and Pricor, an American private company. No expense has been spared and a succession of Home Office ministers have been flown to the USA to view model private penal institutions. Professional public affairs lobbyists GJW have been employed by Contract Prisons to woo the government in the face of competition from other consortia. (Mowlem/McAlpine/US Corrections Corpora-

tion and Group 4/Midland Bank are the most serious contenders.)

In *FRE* 69 we highlighted the prison hells run in USA by Corrections Corporation of America. CCA now owns, leases or manages 9 institutions containing 1,719 prison places, more than all its private sector competitors combined.

In CCA-run establishments prisoners are kept in dormitories of 50 to 60 beds. There are no lockers, no privacy. Toilets and showers are unscreened and exposed to the view of guards of both sexes. Prisoners eat in the dormitories and spend up to 23 hours a day in them. There is no payment for prison work. Instead, each day worked gives the prisoner a day off his or her sentence. Physically unfit prisoners have no way of reducing their sentences.

By putting parts of the prison system out to tender, the government will be effectively destroying the minimal accountability that the prison service is currently subject to. Although the Green Paper published in July 1988 states that prisoners in private remand centres should be treated 'no less humanely than in the normal prison system and their rights should be properly safeguarded', there is of course no indication that any mechanism will be set up to implement this.

The Home Office insists that it will pay contractors a set rate for running each institution, rather than a fee per prisoner, thereby attempting to dispel fears of increased overcrowding for profit. Nonetheless, the political consequences of remand centres run by private enterprise is the creation of a powerful lobby against penal reform. While other EEC countries (notably West Germany) are drastically reducing their remand populations, Britain's has increased by 5,000 in 5 years. To ensure continuing profits the influential private sector will now have a vested interest in keeping the remand population at a high level. ■

## in brief

CHARLES GREECHAN

The parents of 19-year old Charles Greechan who was found hanging in his Armley cell in November (*FRE* 83) are suing the Home Office.

Charles was the fourth remand prisoner to commit suicide at Armley in six months. A former young prisoner, Gary Jowett, described being at Armley: 'It's terrible. I felt down all the time. It's just a slum where everyone is depressed.'

Frances Crook, director of the Howard League for Prison Reform, is demanding fundamental changes in the remand system and an urgent inquiry into Armley. She said the experience for remand prisoners is terrifying in this prison where 'over 1,200 are crammed into appalling conditions that wouldn't be allowed in a zoo'.

Armley is the most overcrowded jail in Britain. 1,300 prisoners are locked up in cells designed for 650.

Charles had a history of previous attempted suicides by overdose and had slit his wrists. But he was not given any relevant care on imprisonment. His mother, Anne Greechan, says: 'I'll never stop until I get justice for what's happened to my son'.

Alexa Byrne

NOTICE - ALL WINGS

Long Lartin prison governor's response to a mass food protest on 3 January: 'After a number of complaints that the food quality had deteriorated significantly, I have had long discussions with all grades of staff including Catering Staff. I have identified a number of areas which may have contributed to a drop in the quality of the food and am taking measures to put these right.

The point has now been made and I would ask that there are no further complaints until I have had time to do something about it. It is of no help to anyone or the situation for men to be continually complaining and it will only lead to confrontation and the situation getting out of hand. I am certainly not prepared to accept that any complaints should be accompanied with abuse to staff or any further group reaction. The situation certainly does not warrant that and I do not wish to be forced into a position where I have to take any further action. If I have to I will before it gets out of all proportion. Enough is Enough! Signed, J Whitty Governor

## Prisoners birthdays

Liam Quinn	6 February
No. 49930, Albany Prison	
Michael McKenney	7 February
No. L46486, Frankland	
John McComb	25 February
No. B51715, Frankland	
Ella O'Dwyer	3 March
No. D25135, Durham	

Addresses  
HM Prison Albany, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 5RS  
HM Prison Durham, Old Elvet, Durham DH1 3HU  
HM Prison Frankland, Finchale Avenue, Brasside, Durham DH1 5ID

Winston Silcott (B74053) has been moved to HMP Albany address as above

## UNHYGIENIC PRISON

Wormwood Scrubs hospital wing was evacuated after it was flooded with sewage. The biggest prison in England is left without hospital facilities. Hammersmith and Fulham Council environmental health inspectors say the prison is dangerously unhygienic with leaking lavatories, one bath shared by 20 prisoners, a drinking water tap too close to the toilets and a water pipe leak repaired with tape. The Council has no power to force the Scrubs authorities to make improvements as prisons have Crown immunity.

Nicki Jameson

## ROOFTOP PROTEST AT RISLEY

On Saturday 21 January, 12 prisoners at 'Grisly Risley' staged an overnight rooftop protest against the appalling conditions, in particular the bad quality of the food. Inmates in D wing barricaded a landing with beds and chairs. Then 12 of them used a cell door to break through a wall and climbed on to the roof. Four of the prisoners stayed out for 15 hours in freezing weather.

Alexa Byrne

## STOP PRESS

As we go to press 200 police officers have been sent in to Wandsworth Prison, London - the first time police have been deployed in a prison for 70 years - as a result of a prison officers' dispute over weekend work rotas. Two assistant governors were attacked and injured and two fires were started in the prison. Prisoners reacted strongly to the use of police in the prisons and the atmosphere at this overcrowded Victorian slum, called a prison, was said to be tense.

# REPRESSION IN THE LINCOLN CONTROL UNIT

JOHN BOWDEN

On 26 July 1988 John McGranaghan, serving a life sentence and classified by the prison authorities as a 'difficult and disruptive prisoner', was sentenced by a Prison Board of Visitors disciplinary adjudication to a substantial period in solitary confinement for his part in a protest within the Lincoln Prison special control unit on 25 July 1988. On 15 December 1988 McGranaghan was finally granted legal aid to challenge the legitimacy and procedural handling of the BOV adjudication, taking one step further his efforts to publicly confront the Home Office Prison Department over its sinister and largely secretive use of so-called 'behaviour-modification' programmes and experiments as a means of control and repression in prison.

The control unit, or 'special wing' at Lincoln, opened in May 1987, was intended as the first phase of a much wider programme 'special facilities' for the 'treatment' and suppression of dissidence in prison, in accordance with the Home Office Control Review Committee's report on the re-creation of special control units.

It was therefore important to the Home Office that the Lincoln unit should work, and be publicly seen to work; although a degree of public unease about the re-creation of control units was anticipated, the Home Office had already achieved a consensus of agreement with the more 'respectable' and state-patronised

prison reform organisations that the introduction of 'special wings' was ultimately to the benefit of everyone, including these prisoners placed within the units because of their unwillingness to compromise with the prison system on issues directly affecting their legal and human rights.

The protest in the Lincoln unit last July (during which warders locked three prisoners inside a fire and smoke filled 'free association' room, compelling John McGranaghan to smash an observation window in the door, releasing the toxic smoke onto the landing and forcing the screws to free them) was staged both to highlight the inhuman treatment of Joe Vratsides, who had recently passed through the unit, and bring attention to their collective situation at Lincoln. The protest, and the inevitable brutalisation afterwards of those who participated, clearly illustrated that the cycle of repression and resistance intrinsic to the prison system can never be arrested or restricted to 'manageable proportions' by the use of control-units.

Immediately after the protest all of the prisoners were transferred elsewhere throughout the system and placed in solitary confinement. The unit was closed while repairs were carried out and revisions of an even more restrictive and oppressive nature made in the regime. Today the Lincoln unit is again 'operational', and last November another control-unit was opened at Hull, bringing to three the number of units now in existence; the unit at C wing Parkhurst

with a psychiatric orientation has now been open for a number of years. The 'liberal' prison reform organisations have maintained their conspicuous silence on the issue of control-units. A campaign for the closure of the units won't originate from that particular quarter. But the building of such a campaign is of the utmost importance because control-units are in the final analysis political weapons, designed to contain and break the resistance of poor and working class prisoners, and consolidate the power of prison as an agency of social control and repression. It is in all our interests, the indivisible interest of oppressed people both in and outside of prison, to unite in a common and organised struggle against the control unit weapon; while it continues to be wielded against prisoners who resist and question the conditions of their imprisonment, the power of prison and of the state is enhanced and extended.

'There's a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part, you can't even tacitly take part. And you've got to put your bodies upon the the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop. And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all.'

John McGranaghan is now at Long Lartin. ■



# Whose earth?

LAURIE SPARHAM/NETWORK



The Greenhouse Effect is caused by the large amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> being emitted by burning fossil fuels. It is this increase in CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere that is trapping heat there. Its effect is being worsened by the rapid deforestation of large areas of the earth whose trees would otherwise be converting CO<sub>2</sub> into oxygen. In addition, a molecule of the Chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) gases used in aerosol sprays, fast food cartons and fridges traps 100,000 times more of the earth's heat than a molecule of CO<sub>2</sub>. As a result of all this the earth's average temperature has risen by 0.5C since 1900 and sea levels have risen by 10-15cm as the ice caps melt. An increase of just one degree would make the world warmer than at any time during the past 120,000 years causing sea levels to rise by 1.65 metres by 2030.

An increase of just one metre would flood a sixth of Egypt's arable land and make eight million people homeless; 15 million people in Bangladesh would lose their homes and livelihoods; many of Asia's best rice growing regions would be ruined; Pacific Island nations like Tuvalu would disappear; much of the Eastern seaboard of North America would be drowned; flooding in London would put 1.3 million people at risk and 15 million people in Britain and Ireland would lose their homes.

However this deeply serious crisis has not led to any effective action by the capitalist countries. Although CFC consumption urgently needs to be cut by 85% of its present level, they are committed only to a 50% reduction.

## RUTHLESS PURSUIT OF PROFIT

The Thatcher government's response to this crisis has been to reduce its budget for energy efficiency, sack environmental scientists, hold up action on acid rain, get rid of the Waste Management Advisory Council, refuse to implement crucial sections of the 1974 Control of Pollution Act and tell the water authorities and their half million acres of land to greedy entrepreneurs. Thatcher is opportunistically promoting an increase in the use of nuclear power as an alternative to fossil fuel consumption. Whilst nuclear power offers a theoretical alternative to fossil fuels the risks and costs involved are staggering.

The Greens are today the dominant force in the environmental debate. Nathon Porritt, Director of Friends of the Earth, and author of *Seeing Green*, argues that massive global destruction is imminent without 'more sustainable patterns of economic development'. Communists share Porritt's concern for the environment and agree with the need for more sustainable patterns of economic development not only to halt the destruction of the environment but also to provide for the needs of humanity.

However, we have major differences with the green view on how this is to be achieved. Porritt believes in 'socialised capitalism', having rejected both capitalism and communism as 'one super-ideology - industrialism'. Whilst he recognises that industrialism has brought enormous material benefits he argues that the threat to the environment comes from industrialism, large scale production, population growth, increased consumption and irrational production.

By ignoring the fact that industrial production under capitalism is organised in the interests of a minority of profit makers, Porritt reveals the roots of what proves to be his reactionary and utopian outlook. It is capitalism's ruthless pursuit of profit that wreaks havoc on both human and other natural resources. At its essence capitalism is irrational, wasteful, destructive and unplanable. We see this in its naked form in the destruction of the Amazon rain forest.

So far this decade the world has experienced the four warmest years in a century - 1980, 1981, 1983 and 1987. Australian research has established that three quarters of the world's beaches are eroding and US scientists have found that the Arctic permafrost has warmed by up to three degrees centigrade over the last 100 years. These are just some of the first early warnings of an impending global crisis as the world's climate begins to go through its greatest change in 100,000 years. Global warming - the 'Greenhouse Effect' - threatens to take its toll in Britain and the rest of the world over the next 40 years. DAVE KENNY, LORNA REID and MAXINE WILLIAMS investigate.

Large parts of this precious resource are being felled in order to graze cattle for McDonald's inedible burgers and lavish profits.

## AN OLD ARGUMENT

Rejecting both capitalism and communism, Porritt seeks a third path: the triumph of reasonableness. How is this triumph to be achieved? He advances proposals for an environmentally aware workforce and community created through government initiatives. He is oblivious to the fact that the British ruling class simply will not do this - they are driven by profit and not by Mr Porritt's reasonableness.

Stripped to basics Porritt's very 'modern' green argument proves to

be a very old and utopian one. It is the belief that capitalism can be persuaded to see the error of its ways and become non-exploitative and non-imperialistic.

But it can't. The first step towards the liberation of humanity and the rational organisation of production and consumption is the overthrow of capitalism. And because Porritt rejects this he is forced to resort to other ancient and anti-working class arguments: those of Malthus. Malthus believed that nineteenth century poverty was caused by the unbridled reproduction of the working classes. The answer? 'Stop them breeding'. And Porritt's 'modern' answer? 'Stop them breeding'. He wants to reduce Britain's population to 30 million. One of the means of doing this is to be withdrawal of child benefit after the

second child. The other is to be 'non-racist' immigration controls. This is also an old chestnut. Britain's immigration controls can only be racist, since they exist largely to keep out immigrants fleeing Third World poverty. As is always the case our utopian dreamer becomes a reactionary and it is the working class and oppressed who have to pay the price for Porritt's 'reasonable' programme.

## AN ISSUE FOR THE LEFT

Porritt is understandably scathing about the British left's backward attitude on environmental issues which is often a crude 'wait for the revolution' and a refusal to acknowledge that something must be done now about these problems. He also

rightly asks the left: 'I would be fascinated if somebody could explain how they would supply the necessary numbers of cars, houses and cigars etc for 5 billion people.' The answer is not a glib 'socialism can do this'. The real answer is that under socialism rational and conscious planning becomes possible. For example, decent public transport systems would eliminate the indulgent luxury of millions of individual cars. Socialised domestic work would eliminate much of the human and material waste presently involved in individual family care and consumption. Resources could be carefully utilised and recycled and serious environmental problems would be given the scientific and social attention they must have.

By this we are not saying 'wait for the revolution'. We are saying ultimately we must overthrow capitalism to solve these problems but must also begin to fight these battles now against the multi-national despoilers of the earth.

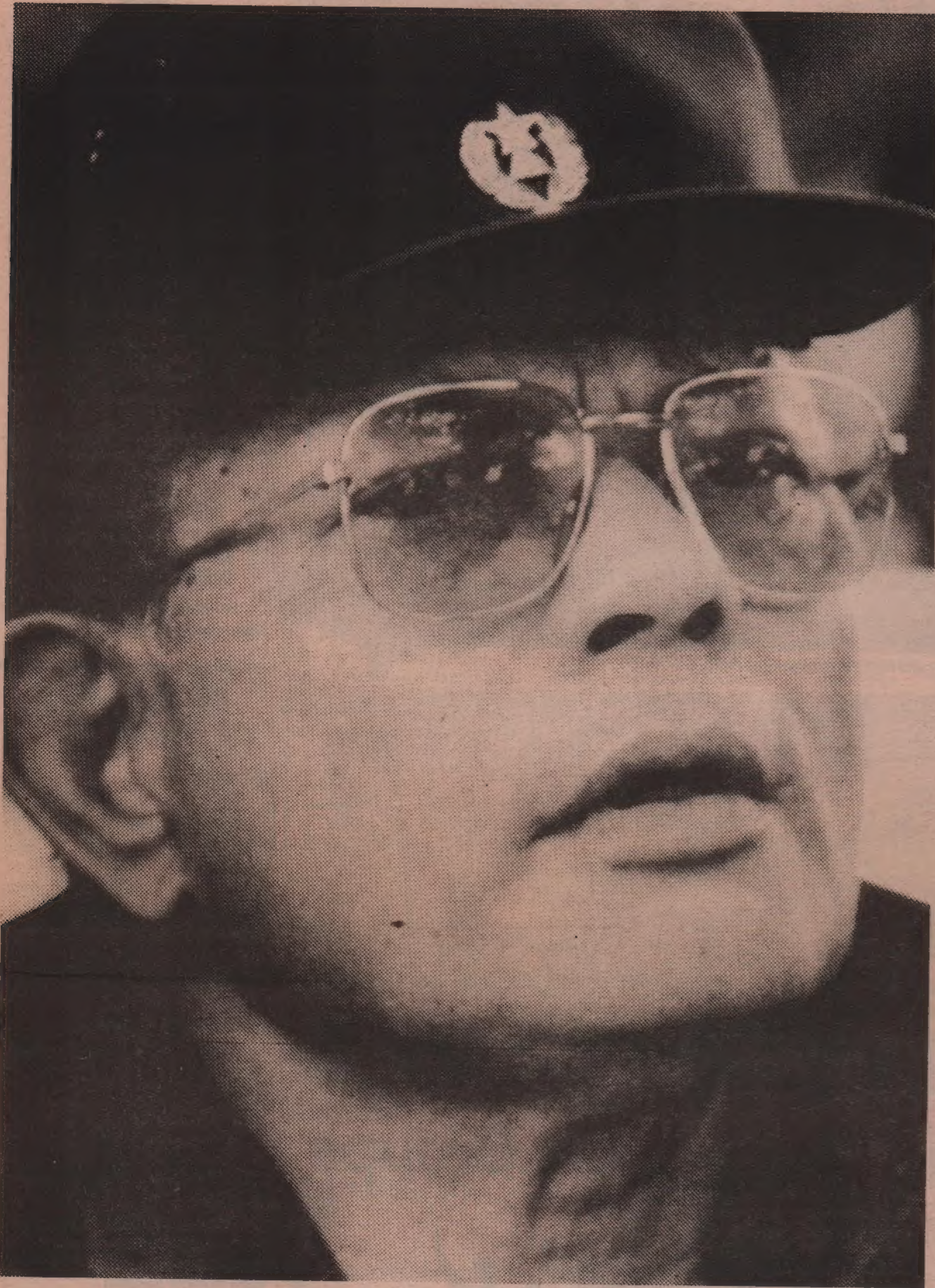
## A WORLD TO WIN

Let us take the example of the oppressed nations. Loans from the imperialist banks, governments and the IMF have created a debt recently calculated at \$1,300 billion. The implementation of high interest rates as a curb on borrowing throws third world economies into even greater crisis. The pressure to repay loans brings about even greater oppression of the working class in the oppressed nations. The enormous debts imposed on the oppressed countries by imperialist banks force them to clear forests to grow fast cash crops and mine minerals to repay their debt interest. Porritt's answer is to demand of these countries that they delink their economies from the developed world and to suggest that aid in the form of grants should be given as an incentive for the 'right kind' of growth. They must, he says, grow food for domestic use and not for export. Yet caught in the stranglehold of imperialism, this is precisely what they cannot do. Our communist answer is to fight alongside these nations for the cancellation of their debts and their liberation from imperialism. We have examples to follow. Chico Mendes led the rubber tappers union in Brazil in a struggle to defend both their livelihoods and the rainforest which he knew were intimately linked. He was murdered by the Brazilian land barons. However he has left a legacy of struggle which points the way forward. We fight for social justice and for a planet which will one day belong not to the exploiters but to the exploited.

In the socialist countries there are undoubtedly major environmental problems. The difference is that whilst Thatcher cries green crocodile tears about the environment, in the Soviet Union a real debate has begun. Unfettered by the profit drive the socialist countries have the potential of developing their economies to meet the needs of their people without recklessly destroying natural resources. The same potential does not exist under capitalism. That is why we say to those people who are rightly and genuinely worried about the earth's future: join the struggle against imperialism. It is in this struggle that the hope of the earth and its peoples lies. In the course of our struggle to build a better society to meet our needs without ending our existence we require the utmost democracy. We require the healthiest environment possible. We cannot allow future generations to suffer as a result of brutal capitalist plunder and pillage. Those generations will live in the epoch of socialism. That superior social system cannot be denied its existence because the present system has irreparably damaged the planet Earth.



# Saving Lake Managua



These are extracts from a speech by Tomás Borge at the first Seminar for Saving Lake Xolotlán (Lake Managua). He is Minister of the Interior in the Sandinista government and is the only surviving founder of the FSLN. It was first published in Nicaragua in 1982.

He deals in the speech with the appalling legacy of pollution which imperialism and the Somoza dictatorship has left for the Nicaraguan people, in particular the threat to one of Nicaragua's great resources, Lake Managua. Despite the continuing attacks on Nicaragua by imperialism, the Sandinistas have begun to implement the solutions outlined in Borge's speech. Thanks to the revolution, Lake Managua is alive and the people fish and boat on it.

## 'Without the People, Saving Lake Managua Will Not Be Possible'.

Indeed, if capitalism is not interested in men themselves, how could it be interested in nature?

Capitalism sees men only as a source of labour and sees nature only as a raw material to produce merchandise; the capitalist conception of the world is that of an immense market. And all activity of this market has but one goal: accumulating profits in the capitalist's pockets. What could converting a forest into a desert matter to a timber company, provided the sale of wood is profitable? What

could poisoning a river matter to a producer of chemical products, provided the products sell well on the market? What could poisoning the rivers with cyanide matter to a mining company?

Our conception of nature is completely different. Man as a physical being does not end where his organic body does. Without nature man is nothing; equally, nature would be worth nothing without man.

Man not only lives in nature physically, he also lives with it spiritually. What is art if not nature that man appropriates under the form of beauty? What is science if not nature which man appropriates with thought?

But initially nature is not man's nature. In order for nature to be his inorganic body, man must transform it; he must humanize it. And this is a process that has lasted for centuries, for all of human history. In this respect, the characteristic of capitalism is that it utilizes humanity's discoveries to dehumanize nature, and even to make it inhuman.

How could man feel himself part of nature while breathing smog in the great urban centers? How could man feel himself completed by a nature that is converted into biochemical weapons and neutron bombs?

For us, all this work of capitalist destruction of nature is summed up in the current state of Lake Managua.

The importance of this lake strikes you at once: on the one hand, we have its indisputable strategic situation: a zone where almost 24 per cent of the country's total population and some 40 percent of the urban population is situated; a region where the largest productive investments, the greatest amount of infrastructure, and the country's highest-quality soil are found. Lake Managua provides us: drinkable water, fish, irrigation for this soil which we've recognized as the country's best, energy for a population which has the country's greatest demand for it, and finally, recreation, tourism, and beauty.

What did *somocismo* do with this lake? That is to say, what did imperialism and its local agents do during the forty-some years that the *somocista* dictatorship functioned as the instrument of its domination in Nicaragua?

In the first place, we should focus on the effects on the strip of land surrounding the lake, brought about by the type of agriculture imposed on us by the imperialist requirements of the world market. The intensification of the cultivation of coffee, sugar, and above all, cotton, signified the progressive loss of the natural soil layer, especially beginning with the 1950s. We should not forget that coffee, sugar and cotton are imported crops, foreign to our soil, so that capitalist intensification of these crops simply develops a process of destroying our natural ecological system that drags it further back. The consequence of this is the running off of sediments into the lake.

But, in addition, technological dependency imposed on the country the importation of costly products, of pesticide substances that don't decompose for a long time and which drain off into the lake with the sediments.

Later, during the 1960s, when an attempt was made to carry out the program of substituting imports, those factories appeared which, in accord with capitalist logic, began to fill the lake with untreated toxic industrial wastes.

What happens to collective wealth doesn't matter very much to the capitalist, who amassed his profits from the sweat of the collectivity in his factories and cotton plantations. It doesn't matter very much to the capitalist that 250 fishing families live from the contaminated fish of Lake Xolotlán. It doesn't matter very much to the capitalist—who could go enjoy the wealth resulting from this ecocide on the beaches of Miami—that the poor people of Managua are deprived of the recreation and beauty that nature bestowed on them with Xolotlán.

To our third-rate capitalists, not only did this not matter to them in the slightest, but they even came to actively oppose the possibility of halting this process of destroying our lake.

But imperialism did not have time to complete here that ecocide which other parts of the world can brag about. Capitalism in Europe, its cradle, has had sufficient time to completely contaminate the Rhine, the Danube. In the United States, where to a greater extent than anywhere else, "time is money," capitalism has carried out in a few years the job of ecocide for which the Europeans needed centuries; for example with Lake Erie. In other places, capitalism has even had time to complement ecocide with genocide.

We inherit a sick lake, but not mortally sick. This makes the task of saving it less arduous. But at the same time, the ecological destructive work of imperialism and its local partners contributed enormously to aggravating the natural problem of salinization and lack of drainage.

Let us now examine the plans, the steps for the solution, which you have been discussing in this seminar.

Before everything, it's evident that the first step has been taken with the revolution itself. Our general problem is the problem of underdevelopment, and in acquiring political power we have conquered the possibility of resolving it, a possibility that was completely cut off under the conditions of imperialist domination. In particular, with this political power we have similarly conquered the possibility of saving our lake.

Whichever plan is definitely chosen to save the lake must be rooted in the perspective of the wealth of collective interests. It must be a profitable plan economically, although not economist. It must look at all the beneficial potentials: to fish, energy, irrigation, without leaving anything behind. It must finally look at recreation, at our people's aesthetic enjoyment, without falling into aestheticism, without being anti-economic. Finally, it must look at the limited resources we have at our disposal, as well as the possible methods of financing from abroad.

The second step for solving the problem is that which our government has begun to take together with you in organising and holding this seminar. This step looks toward creating consciousness of the problem, toward the discussion and investigation that should be devoted to the plan which most meets and coordinates the previously mentioned requirements. It looks toward proposing the most suitable methods and instruments to carry them out.

In the first place, it's evident that in the short term we must proceed to the tasks of halting the contamination process. We must proceed to reforestation; we must modify the system of polluted water, preventing it from winding up in the lake. We must push forward biological pest control that *somocismo* boycotted in its time.

Secondly, in the medium-term level, it's indisputable that the definitive plan must consider the renewal of the lake with massive amounts of water from elsewhere.

Now then, none of these steps like all those that our revolution is taking—can be taken firmly without the foundation of the people's participation. The Sandinista people's revolution is no more than our people in action, and without the people's participation, all our efforts run the risk of losing the social content that makes these efforts truly revolutionary. Therefore, all the plans and schemes must be translated into the language of the people, explained to the people. Without the people as the principal protagonist, our revolution would not have been possible, and without this role of the people, saving the lake will also not be possible.

Compañeros: our revolution was nurtured in the mountains; that was our first ally in the struggle against *somocismo*. The nature that imperialism destroyed in the city is the same nature that got its revenge in the mountains by hiding us revolutionaries, by erasing our tracks, by resisting the felling of trees and the fires, and by becoming impenetrable to the enemy's bombardment. In the mountains the children of Sandino contracted a pact with nature. Now we want to fulfil our part.

The imperialists will ask once more how it is possible during this time of emergency for us to be able to hold seminars such as this. They will also have asked how in the mountains, between battles, and how in the jails, between tortures, we could have found time to write poems and songs to our fallen compañeros, to our mothers, our children, our women. They cannot understand any of this. None of this fits within the logic of the merchants.

*Somocismo* murdered tens of thousands of Nicaraguans; it wanted to murder Lake Xolotlán. But Somoza could not kill the people as he could not kill the lake.



Within weeks of entering 1989, two major events have put to the test the strength of communist politics. On 14 January City of London Anti-Apartheid Group celebrated 1000 days and nights of the Non-Stop Picket. Four days later on Wednesday 18 January our comrade Viraj Mendis was violently seized from his sanctuary by 100 police.

City AA's 12-hour rally held outside the South African Embassy on the 1000th day attracted the support of thousands of mainly young people, the very force that has maintained the Non-Stop Picket through three winters. RCG members played a prominent role in both organising and leading the rally.

Throughout the rally we discussed with many activists and new people the centrality of communist politics to the building of a democratic, non-sectarian and thus effective movement against apartheid and British collaboration. 478 copies of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* were sold and £200 worth of political literature was sold from our bookstall. We had booked a meeting room near the picket where our members and supporters went for their breaks to discuss our politics with new people we met.

The very real strength and commitment displayed at the rally was evidence indeed of a new movement being born: young people, black and white, pensioners, the unemployed, trade unionists, lesbians and gay men, women with children united in consistent and principled action. It was the unity of the dispossessed, the forces that have been rejected by Thatcher and ignored and attacked by Kinnock. The political leadership of the RCG has made such unity possible. Open and democratic methods of organising and campaigning bore fruit on 14 January and marked a milestone in the development of an anti-imperialist movement in Britain. 40 people attended our *Communist Forum on South Africa* held on Sunday 22 January to hear David Reed and Carol Brickley talk on the significance of gold production in South Africa to the continuation of apartheid and Britain's role in exploiting the labour of black miners.

It was early in the morning of Wednesday 18 January that we were alerted to the violent raid on the sanctuary of our comrade Viraj Mendis. Immediately our members and supporters organised with other members of the VMDC up and down the country to respond to this brutal and racist attack. From Wednesday onwards all methods of resistance were used - legal and official challenges to the Home Office, spontaneous marches and sit-downs, occupations of Home Office buildings, street meetings, pickets outside the Home Office, Downing Street, Moss Side police station, Pentonville prison and Parliament was disrupted twice. We responded quickly to press and media lies and censorship. Many of our members and supporters spoke on radio phone-in shows to combat the lies of the Home Office.

At every event we stressed that our comrade was under attack because he is a black communist. Every day of his sanctuary was a victory against the vast resources of the British state. The success of the VMDC, under the leadership of the RCG, in building a national campaign in defence of Viraj Mendis, forced the British press and media to give extensive coverage not only to the police raid on the sanctuary but also to the fact that Britain's immigration controls are the worst in Europe. Viraj's courageous stand against deportation exposed the vile racism central to British immigration controls and the lengths to which the Thatcher government will go, unopposed by Kinnock, to smash resistance to this racism. On Wednesday 1 February the RCG is holding a public meeting on the VMDC and the necessity of building a movement against immigration controls.

# Organise with *FRFI*



14 January: The RCG mobilised for 1000 days and nights of the Non-Stop Picket.



18 January: Demonstration in Manchester after our comrade Viraj Mendis was seized by the police.

## Readers and Supporters Groups



Britain's political prisoners.

Throughout our campaigning work we have held our regular *FRFI* Readers & Supporters Groups to explain to and discuss with readers of our newspaper the politics of the RCG. In December and January we held meetings on *Britain's Political Prisoners*, *Defend the NHS*, and *What Price Human Rights?* on Gorbachev's speech to the United Nations.

*Britain's Political Prisoners* discussed the inhumane conditions in British jails and resistance built amongst prisoner. We discussed the leading role played by Irish POWs in British jails in resisting the criminalisation process and in fighting for prisoners' rights. We stressed the importance of building a movement on the outside to support the struggle for democratic rights for prisoners and to expose the conditions inside prison.

At our meeting *Defend the NHS* we discussed with activists from the dis-

pute the nature of the attack on the NHS and why it was necessary for Thatcher to wage this attack in order to push through her privatisation programme on health care. Drawing on the lessons learned from the 1984/5 miners' strike we argued the necessity for health workers to break from the old methods of struggle imposed by the official Labour and trade union movement and unite with the working class communities who depend on the NHS and welfare facilities to care for themselves and their families.

*What Price Human Rights?* examined the content of Gorbachev's speech to the United Nations on 7 December. We discussed why it was necessary for the Soviet Union to cut its defence expenditure in order to build its economy and the potential of the socialist countries, by laying down a series of challenges to the im-

perialist nations, to give a lead to the disarmament process. We explained the hypocrisy of the imperialist nations in attacking the record of the Soviet Union on its record of human rights whilst they continue to wage relentless war against the oppressed peoples worldwide. We argued that communists must welcome Gorbachev's speech and use it to build a movement which can force Britain to take the path of disarmament and re-establish the basic democratic rights lost under nine years of the Thatcher government.

During February and March we will be holding Readers & Supporters Groups on Viraj Mendis and opposition to immigration controls, the struggle of the Palestinian people and the crisis of environmental destruction. We urge all our readers to attend these meetings.

Lorna Reid

FIGHT RACISM!  
FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

## Readers and Supporters Groups

**VIRAJ MENDIS AND THE FIGHT AGAINST IMMIGRATION CONTROLS**  
Tuesday 7 February 7.30pm

**North London:**  
Red Rose Club, Seven Sisters Road, N4 (nearest tube Finsbury Park)

**South London:**  
Station Pub, Camberwell New Road, SE5 (near Camberwell Green)

**Birmingham:**  
Friday 10 February 1pm  
Council Chambers, Guild of Students, University of Birmingham

For details of meetings in your area contact *FRFI*.

### RCG DAYSCHOOLS

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THATCHERISM



London 12 February  
Manchester 19 February

For details of venue and time please phone 01-837 1688 or write to BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

### RCG COMMUNIST FORUM ON SOUTH AFRICA

19 February 6.30pm  
Marchmont Centre, Marchmont Street, WC1 (nearest tube Russell Square)

**SOUTH AFRICA'S BANTUSTANS ARE APARTHEID'S CONCENTRATION CAMPS**  
Speakers: Gary Rose and Jenny Sutton

### PUBLIC MEETING

**Amir Kabul Khan Sanctuary Campaign**  
12 February 5pm  
Allah Ditta Civic Centre, 553 Coventry Road, Birmingham

### FORTHCOMING RCG PAMPHLET: GIBRALTAR - GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER

A comprehensive account of the murder of the Gibraltar Three and the subsequent inquest. In a blow by blow account this pamphlet puts the British government in the dock and finds them guilty of murder. The Gibraltar Three were the latest in a long line of shoot-to-kill operations against the Irish people by the British forces.

Advance orders to BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX. Phone 837 1688 for price details.



# LETTERS

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**Miners Strike 1984-85 People versus State** by David Reed and Olivia Adamson. 144pp, special offer £1 plus 40p p&p

**South Africa: Britain out of Apartheid! Apartheid out of Britain!** by Carol Brickley, Terry O'Halloran and David Reed. 64pp, 95p plus 30p p&p

**New pamphlet: Viraj Mendis Life or Death?** Edited by Eddie Abrahams and Viraj Mendis. 48pp, £1.50 plus 30p p&p

All cheques/POs payable to Larkin Publications. Please send your orders to Larkin Publications, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

## News from Australia

The news of Viraj Mendis' deportation was reported in two of Melbourne's three dailies. I assume it was also reported in other states' newspapers. It was also reported on a radio broadcast on Thursday morning that he had been seized from sanctuary and on the SBS news service which reported demonstrations at Gatwick and Geneva.

As I see it the use of sanctuary in such cases is a powerful political weapon as well as being very necessary to stop deportations. Obviously the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign was a necessary trail-blazer against the racist state's practices under its immigration laws.

Here in Australia the inquiry into Aboriginal deaths in custody continues. The head of the inquiry - Muirhead - is leaving to be an administrator in the Northern Territory which raises

the question of who should be his successor. Some Aboriginal activists want it to be one of his two assistants. The inquiry is coming under a lot of pressure but is continuing. In Western Australia a state election is to be held soon and the opposition Liberal Party has promised that it will close down the inquiry in Western Australia. The Police Union there is opposed to the inquiry and yet on a per capita basis has the highest number of deaths in custody. The other thing is that, despite 'improvements' to prevent deaths, they are still continuing, even in 'suicide-proof' cells.

The continued growth in Aboriginal resistance and organised fightback is regarded very poorly by sections of corporate Australia, as much of it is directed towards the question of land rights - how much, and more importantly what does it mean? Much of the area claimed, it is now realised, has great

mining potential, and the mining lobby is very powerful in Australia. Some of them are anxious to stop the granting of any further land to Aboriginal groups. The leading spokesman for them is Hugh Morgan of Western Mining Corporation. At the same time the ALP Federal Government is anxious to export uranium - although at present it is limited, the Roxby Towns mine is allowed to export uranium along with its other output. Much of Australia's exports is still primary production - wool, mutton, beef, minerals and wheat - which is why the Australian government is so anxious about trade groupings, subsidised agriculture and protectionism.

Despite 20 years of rhetoric about manufacturing, hi-tech etc, Australia still 'rides on the sheep's back'. Within this context land rights are an explosive issue for the left as well as the right. Leftists support the demand for

land rights and Aboriginal control of tribal land. However, control gives the possessors of the land the ability to obtain a real income, independent of the various state and Federal authorities, by allowing mining on their land.

This brings up the potential of a conflict with environmentalists and, in the case of uranium mining, the nuclear disarmament groups. Australia has a fairly strong anti-nuclear lobby and at least two senators elected solely on the platform of opposition to nuclear weapons and nuclear power. Much of the anti-nuclear stance is due to continued French nuclear testing in the south Pacific, although British tests at Maralinga in the 50s in Australia have also come in for a formal inquiry, as well as opposition to any naval craft that is believed to be carrying nuclear weapons. Yours in solidarity,

TONY BIDGOOD  
Victoria, Australia

## No normal sport in an abnormal society

The white dominated South African Rugby Board are desperate for international rugby. Doctor Dannie Craven is doing some window dressing of the Rugby Board and he claims that talks with the ANC would help to break the boycott on sport. How can Craven improve conditions of sport for black people? How does he intend to reform apartheid in sport?

The Stop The Seventies Tour (STST) was so militant. When the racist Springbok team arrived in Britain they had a hard time. We will not be conned by Craven's lies and his phoney promises. We will always make a stand with the black majority. We will not share a platform with the enemy. The boycott campaign must continue until apartheid has been destroyed. We will fight alongside the liberation movements in South Africa/Azania until they achieve their aims.

Yours in struggle,  
ERROL BAPTISTE  
London

## Stop murder at work

Appallingly low levels of health and safety on building sites caused 160 deaths in 1988. Even ordinary citizens are not safe. Last year 7 were killed. Walking under a ladder is even more dangerous these days!

The very low level of Union organisation on most sites has allowed employers to cut back on safety standards. Employers are being permitted to murder workers as they know that the average fine, following a death on site, is only £450. As profits increase the price of a building worker's life is falling!

The Construction Safety Campaign wants to end the carnage. On 7 February they will be outlining their demands, which include heavily fining and imprisoning employers who cause a worker's death. Every worker should be able to join a union and to elect their own safety representatives. This will involve ending the illegal blacklist which many employers are known to operate.

The group in greatest danger are young Irish workers who have come to find work. They are unaware of their rights, badly paid and working on dangerous sites with few facilities. The Irish in Britain Representation Group

(IBRG) is extremely concerned about this and will be putting those concerns to the meeting.

Other speakers are Hackney Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) and the Joint Shop Stewards Committee. The DLO has never had a fatal accident, but Government plans to cut contract compliance conditions will reduce safety standards and put Council building workers in danger. For further information contact: Mark Metcalf (Hackney TUSU) 01-249 8086/6930 or Alan Russell (Hackney DLO Convenor) 01-986 0017. HACKNEY TRADE UNION SUPPORT UNIT

## Press complicity

Today the Windlesham/Rampton independent report into the journalism and showing of *Death on the Rock* was published. It vindicated the IBA who, despite heavy pressure from Geoffrey Howe, went ahead with the unintentionally damning indictment of the SAS men who ambushed and murdered Sean Savage, Dan McCann and Mairead Farrell in Gibraltar. The journalists and researchers were found to have behaved properly and professionally in their search for evidence and in their making of the programme. The same cannot be said about the behaviour of the gutter press, or the so-called 'qualities' for that matter.

After the murders Geoffrey Howe gleefully informed the media that there was a bomb on the rock, that the three IRA volunteers were armed, and that they had been shot only when they made threatening gestures towards the gun-toting SAS men. Even after Howe had admitted that there was no bomb and the Gibraltar Three were really unarmed, the press attempted to hide the truth with an elaborate smoke-screen at the behest of Thatcher and Kinnock and Co. The day after the murders none of the press reports carried the same basic fact - there was no bomb and the three were helpless when the SAS ambushed. Once the seeds of anti-Irish propaganda had been sown they set out, in many different directions, to cover for the atrocity that had been committed. Once eyewitness Carmen Proetta had given an interview which implicitly pointed the finger at the SAS, the press brutally set out to discredit her. Other witnesses suffered the same fate.

However, *Death on the Rock*

stood alone amongst the popular media in its reporting, and remains an embarrassment to the government. In the words of the report written by a Tory, 'The programme-makers were experienced, painstaking and persistent. They did not bribe, bully or misrepresent those who took part in the programme... Those who made it were acting in good faith and without ulterior motives'. The same cannot be said of the government and their cronies. GARY ROSE  
S. London

## The Red Dragon Newsletter

We send you many fraternal greetings. Here at the Washington State Reformatory in Monroe, Washington, there is a group of prisoners preparing to republish the quarterly *Red Dragon* journal, a newsletter of prison news and analysis from a Marxist perspective. The paper will contain analysis, tactical and strategic, on various forms of struggle, including armed struggle. We hope to initiate and maintain discussion and debate over these types of struggle, why some have failed and others have achieved their objectives. It will also contain information of an internationalist nature, of struggles and conditions in prisons around the world.

We plan to publish our first edition in August 1989. While the *RD* will be aimed at furthering discussion amongst prisoners who already have a political consciousness, we also see it as an instrument of propaganda to inform and politicize the 'common' prisoners who form the vast majority of our companions here behind the walls.

As politically conscious prisoners we see a great need for a publication that will analyze various theoretical points and also inform its readers on the levels and progress of various struggles around the world. Knowledge of each other's struggles is the first step towards unity.

We would like to know if you know of persons, prisoners or groups that would be interested in receiving the *Red Dragon*? While the *Red Dragon* will be Marxist in orientation, we will not ignore or give less importance to anarchist struggles or prisoners or other progressive political lines or currents. We will maintain a consistent line opposed to imperialism, zionism, apartheid, colonialism, etc. We will support



groups and movements that are struggling against imperialism, whether it is in the third world or in the industrialized countries.

For more information or to answer any questions you may have, please contact Edward A. Mead # 251397 (the *RD*'s editor, contact in English) or Paul A. Wright # 930783 (contact in English or Spanish), at PO Box 777, Monroe, WA 98272 USA. In struggle and solidarity, ED MEAD and PAUL WRIGHT  
Washington, USA

## Remand prisoner Jack

City AA members attended court on 17 January in solidarity with Jack, a comrade arrested on the Non-Stop Picket on Boxing Day, who, having pleaded guilty to 3 assaults on the police, was remanded in custody for social and medical reports despite his stable home address, previous clean record and willingness to comply with enquiries.

Instead of appearing for sentencing, Jack was nowhere to be seen. Brixton Prison officers had taken him to the wrong court. Neither the police at West London Magistrates Court where Jack was, nor Bow Street where he should have been, would take responsibility for transporting him across London. So Jack was re-remanded until the following day when it transpired 3 weeks was not long enough to compile a medical report and he was sent back into custody. Jack was released on probation on 25 January after spending 7 days in Cannon Row police station. So much for Douglas Hurd's promise to clear police cells of remand prisoners! NICKI RENSTEN  
London



## Write to:

FRFI,  
BCM Box 5909  
London  
WC1N 3XX  
or ring:  
01-837 1688

## Black prisoners

A friend has recently passed on to me the Nov/Dec issues of your paper *FRFI* and I was very interested in the large article about racism in prison and other political ideas put forward by the paper towards prison and black prisoners in particular, as this subject is more often treated with ignorance, even by black prisoners themselves, believe it not! It was extremely refreshing to say the least to read a revolutionary newspaper that actually understood and appreciated the struggle of black people in prison. We have been ignored and left unsupported as a group for too long!

I have always stayed well away from politics even once I fully understood what it was about, especially the way it is used to abuse whole sections of society. Now come to see it as a necessary evil that black people must learn to use, outside or on this side of the fence in order to get fair and equal treatment from the men who actually run the jails, who sometimes seem elusive to the average prisoner, and society in general. What I really want to ask is to be included in your mailing list and also considered as an enormous enthusiastic political pal for one of your cadres. I would like to establish regular contact and correspondence, both as a means now to my own greater political learning and understanding and as a channel to communicate the collective experience of black prisoners as I feel we have become too insular and inward looking. A lot of black prisoners don't even realise that they too have a voice and that it can be heard in papers like yours.

I look forward very much to hearing from you soon,  
Best wishes and solidarity  
Unity is strength  
R C SMITH  
HMP Long Lartin



# FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

# 1000 Days and Nights

The bourgeois media had for 1000 days and nights virtually ignored the Non-Stop Picket outside the racist South African Embassy. This time BBC and ITN news crews, the *Guardian*, *Independent*, *Standard*, *City Limits*, local and national radio and the music media could not have kept their mouths shut, even if Botha and Thatcher themselves had slapped on a ban.

RICHARD ROQUES/DOMINIQUE SACCARÉ

On 12 January six Labour MPs joined a delegation from City AA to hand

into Downing Street half a million signatures for the release of Nelson Mandela.

On 14 January several thousand

people joined the Non-Stop Picket, to celebrate 1000 days and nights of continuous active solidarity with music, speeches, singing, chanting,

action, flowers, banners and balloons, to call for the release of Nelson Mandela and all South African political prisoners and detainees. Every speaker and organisation present pledged their continued support for the Non-Stop Picket.

In the morning, the Big Red Band played, followed by the Unemployed Workers' Charter and the Workers' Theatre Movement who performed a piece about the Indian Workers' struggle for independence from British imperialism.

At midday, City AA set up a PA system which could be heard on the other side of Trafalgar Square and half-way down Whitehall. Harry Cohen MP, Molefe Pheto of the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania and the Justice for Kitson Campaign spoke followed by music from Samba band Batucada Mandela.

1000 black balloons were released at 3pm. Carol Brickley for City AA spoke of the continuing harassment of the picket from the Embassy, from fascists, from the cops and of the many victories City AA has achieved over the forces that are ranged against us. Zolile Keke of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania and the P&O strikers also addressed the rally.

City Group Singers ended their set with Nkosi Sikelele Afrika – the national anthem of the dispossessed black majority – and were joined by actress and former Communist Sarah Jane Morris, who also sang a couple of her own songs.

David Reed who spoke for the RCG was cheered by the crowd when he said:

'The people who built this picket and the people who hold the future

of struggle in this country are Thatcher's rejects... the people Thatcher's policies terrorise and oppress.

But it's a warning to Thatcher, a warning that everybody should note, that the unemployed, the low paid, the homeless, the oppressed are fighting back and we, everyone here, have got to fight back alongside them. It starts with the fight against apartheid, it starts with supporting the democratic rights of the black people of South Africa and it ends with defending our rights in this country and fighting for a decent and better society in this country. That's what the Non-Stop Picket stands for.'

By this time, the whole of the east side of Trafalgar Square was lined with supporters and the picket was spilling out into the road.

The gates of the embassy were covered in flowers and Delysia Forbes, sister of Ashley Forbes, launched the campaign for the Cape Town 16.

The many speakers included SWANU, lesbian and gay groups, political organisations and individuals, including Tony Benn. The Mint Juleps played.

At 8pm the Horns of Jericho played and a torchlit rally was held to round off the demonstration at 10pm.

The theme for the day was taken from Nelson Mandela's speech in 1985: 'I cannot sell my birthright nor am I prepared to sell the birthright of the people to be free... your freedom and mine cannot be separated. I WILL RETURN.' ■

For details of forthcoming City Group events phone 01 837 6050

## A Diary of Resistance

April 1986: 500 march into Trafalgar Square to picket the racist South African Embassy until Nelson Mandela is free

August 1986: 'Break the silence' – City AA campaigns successfully against police/Embassy attempts to silence us

March 1987: 5000 march for Mandela through the streets of London to South African Embassy

May-July 1987: Police ban picket from pavement outside Embassy. City AA mounts defiance campaign and wins, after almost 200 arrests; force of campaign draws in trade unionists, councillors and MPs

October 1987: March for Mayekiso: AAM attacks Mayekiso campaign and SWP refuse to support march. 1000 march with City AA to rally at Embassy. City AA continues monthly rallies for 'Alex Five'

March 1988: 'Remember Sharpeville' mass rally at Conway Hall in-

cludes speakers from AZAPO, PAC, SWANU and ANC. City AA launches campaign against South African Airways in response to banning of 18 anti-apartheid organisations in South Africa

June 1988: Soweto Day rally - more than 1000 surround South African Embassy to demand that it be closed down. Police brutally attack demonstration

January 1989: Mass 12-hour rally outside Embassy marks 1000 days and nights for freedom!

Every year the picket regularly celebrates South African Freedom Day, South African Women's Day, Namibian Heroes Day, Mandela's birthday and other events and has held rallies for Zephania Mothopeng, Zwelakhe Sisulu, the Sharpeville Six and many other prisoners and detainees of the apartheid regime.

The struggle continues.

## The RCG and the Non-Stop Picket

ANDY HIGGINBOTTOM/CAT WIENER

They said we could never do it. And yet for one thousand days and one thousand nights, a remarkable event has been unfolding in Trafalgar Square, in the heart of London – the birth of a new movement.

City AA's Non-Stop Picket of the South African Embassy for the release of Nelson Mandela and all political prisoners in South Africa and Namibia is remarkable not only because of its marathon endurance but because of the forces it unites. It is mainly young people – many of them unemployed, many of them homeless – black people, lesbians and gay men – those who have borne the brunt of Thatcher's ruthless policies – and communists who have kept the picket going day and night. It is because of

these forces – traditionally excluded by 'official' political life – that City Group finds itself in the forefront not only in giving solidarity to the struggle against apartheid in South Africa but in fighting against racism here in Britain. These are the forces amongst whom communists must organise, who have proved the most steadfast in resisting repeated police and fascist attacks.

City Group represents a broad alliance of forces, given communist leadership by the RCG. It is because of the success of this alliance that City Group has drawn criticism from many quarters. This criticism has focused on the role of the RCG.

A recent article in *City Limits* (12-19 Jan) repeats the well-worn accusations made by the Anti-Apartheid Movement that the RCG dominates

City Group and is 'divisive and sectarian' and 'narrowing the base of support against apartheid'. The leadership of the AAM and the political trend that it represents work by the politics of bureaucratic control. They do not understand the difference between domination and political leadership; they cannot comprehend a politics that proves in practice, through openly arguing its position in democratically-run meetings, through its commitment to the struggle, through showing by example the correctness of its views – that wins people to a communist standpoint rather than imposes a fixed position upon them. The RCG does not use block votes; we do not dabble in bureaucratic sabotage by guillotining motions, refusing to allow speakers who do not represent our views, by

presenting people with *fait accompli* – the hallmarks of the AAM at its meetings and on its demonstrations.

Democracy is a necessity for taking forward the movement. Communism teaches but it also learns from the experiences of actual struggle. In City AA the RCG has taken part in panel discussions and debates, we have welcomed links with different political trends – in particular with all sections of the liberation movement in South Africa – and on City Group pickets, *everyone* is invited to express their views. On the Non-Stop Picket's 1000-day rally, the RCG spoke alongside PAC, BCMA, Labour MPs, P&O strikers and OLGA.

The *Communist Manifesto* declares: 'Communists fight for the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also take care of the future of that movement'. What is the movement of the present?

British political culture is domina-

ted by the politics of exclusion. It is assumed that any opposition must be confined to the official labour and trade union movement, and not include the most oppressed sections of the working class. What the RCG argues for and defends in City AA is the politics of inclusion. City AA is built amongst those who have been rejected by Thatcher and by the 'official' labour movement. It is because these forces organised on the Non-Stop Picket refuse to compromise that they are capable of drawing in wider sections of the working class. This is because of City AA's *unity in struggle* against apartheid and racism.

Not surprisingly, it is those sections of the labour movement – such as the P&O strikers and the miners – who have themselves had to fight political battles against marginalisation by that movement who have made common cause with City AA.

The others will never know what they're missing until it's too late. ■